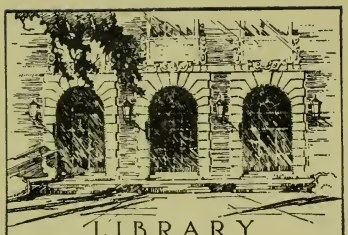

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

BY

JOHN DOUGLAS.

"Some rise by sin; and some by virtue fall.'
—"MEASURE FOR MEASURE."

"Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin."
—MONTAIGNE.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

DISCLOSURES.

"Praised be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love. . ."

Walt Whitman.

THE afternoon light streamed softly into the quiet room where Keith had lain unconscious for a night and a day. It did not fall on his face: the head of the bed came along the outer wall between the window and the corner so that his face was in shadow. But it fell on the face of his nurse as she sat by him. Very weary and worn the sweet face looked; the sweet bright eyes were heavy and had dark rings round them, but the beautiful tender gravity of expression that had made Keith first think her a Quakeress and then call her a pretty Huguenot, was there still, and with it a wonderful soft beauty which had not been there before—the shy sweet pride of a noble woman in the heroism of the man she loves. In accordance with Dr. Anderson's in-

structions, Pauline had been painting. She had little heart for the occupation, excepting as something she could do for Keith; but even her inexperienced eyes could tell, as the day went on, that his lethargy was passing more and more into deep and tranquil sleep. Her picture stood on the easel at just such an angle to the window that Keith would see it as soon as he opened his eyes. It was a sketch from memory of a view from Keith's room in Bankside Crescent. The tree-tops of the square filled the foreground. Then, out of a misty hollow, gables and spires gleamed into shape in the fitful light. Beyond, shining river-levels and soft meadow-lands stretching to low circling hills. And over all, a golden-brown haze in which the red sun half hid himself, while above it he lighted up a luminous sky of transluscent sapphire and gold. Bright lights flickered in the mists and wandered on soft olive hillsides—shone from black hulls and white sails amidst the flaming river-reaches, or waked the heaven-reaching spires to golden glory. And near at hand, just beyond the foliage of the foreground, a massive square tower rose up to gather the beauty of the sunset lights, and was balanced in the composition by a slender vase of cool

white porcelain, which was depicted as standing on the inner ledge of the window; and the open window framed the picture.

"I don't think I need do any more to it now," Pauline whispered to Violet, who had just looked in for a minute to see her. "It will do for what Dr. Anderson wants."

"Yes, dear, I am sure it will, and it will please somebody else as well." And Dame Violet disappeared.

Pauline turned from her picture, and sat looking out through the wide open window, across the green lawn, to the larch woods which rose on the hillside and swept round the little bay to the headland. And over the blue waters beyond, she could see, through "the old June weather,"

> "To where the sunshine sleeps
> On the everlasting hills."

She said the words over softly. How long was it since she had sat in the verandah with Keith when he quoted that verse? She thought how nearly he had indeed been going

> —"far away
> From this world's fitful fire,
> And from this world's waning day."

And her eyes quietly filled with tears as she looked at him—yesterday so strong and brave, and now——

One thought had filled her mind all day:—"I can love him as much as I like while he is like this." She took his nerveless hand in hers as he lay with his arm thrown out, just as the doctor left him. (Had the doctor made the arrangement on purpose? He was a discerning man.) She clasped the dear hand, and kissed it gently; then laid her soft cheek against it, and looked out of the window with sweet tear-dimmed eyes.

"You are all mine to-day, dear love; all mine to-day," she murmured softly.

She still held her palette in her left hand, as if she were going to work again after all, but she leant there, dreaming in a quiet ecstasy of thankfulness for the dear spared life, till at last, worn out as she was by the night's agony and the day's toil, she fell fast asleep.

Tom felt the time hang heavy on his hands. He had never had to contemplate the possibility of such an abnormal state of affairs as Rosebank without Keith. He had been to the stables to see the ponies—they were all right. Then he pulled out to the "Waterwitch" and overhauled the little vessel from stem to stern:—then back to the beach, where he paced moodily up and down. Happening to look down he saw the

fatal bottle at his feet, lying on the sand unbroken just as it had fallen when Keith threw it away. "I'll show this to the doctor," he said, and, carrying it down to the sea, he washed it well and then took his way up the lawn towards the laboratory. As he passed the window of Keith's room, he turned to speak to Pauline, and saw her sleeping with her head on her patient's hand. He noticed the weary look on her pale face, and her long eyelashes wet with tears.

"Poor lass!" he said, "it's no wonder she is worn out. . . . But I suppose she would hardly care to be seen. I must take care that nobody comes this way."

Putting the bottle in his pocket, he went to the window of the next room, and, opening it softly, got out a folding chair, in which he established himself further down the lawn. Then he took out a cigar and lit it.

"It doesn't matter about the door," he thought. "She will hear anyone coming in and be up before they get round the screen."

Tom's precautions were not unnecessary. He had not half finished his cigar, when Hugh and Violet came round from the front of the house.

Tom gave Violet his chair, and kept Hugh from going further by holding him in talk. But Tom was out in his calculations after all. Hugh and Violet had made their escape from the house, by taking advantage of Mrs. Crawfurd's having gone to visit the patient. Pauline did not awake when the door opened, but on the other hand Mrs. Crawfurd did not notice the girl's face, nor how her head rested on Keith's hand.

"I don't wonder that she's tired, poor thing," said the old lady as she went quietly out again. "Violet ought really to take her share of the nursing, even if she isn't Keith's wife."

The slight noise made by Mrs Crawfurd in closing the door, broke Keith's long slumber. Wearily he opened his eyes, and they first rested on the sketch, as had been intended. Keith looked at it with a lazy interest in the warm glowing colour, and gradually awoke to some faint recognition of the scene, and then to the fact that it was a picture. Then, following the lines of the easel, he caught sight of the palette and brushes in Pauline's left hand, and absently noticed the figure by his bedside, and then at last he saw the pure sweet face set in its frame of dark hair, against the white bed-covering.

He did not know it, but it was pleasant to look upon; but when a faint stir of recognition set in, the effort was too much for him, and he dozed off again. Very soon he opened his eyes again, but the picture did not detain him this time, and his wandering gaze was only arrested by the girl's face which now seemed familiar, and at length the effort at recognition was successful; only, however, to send him again into the depths of unconsciousness. This time he slept longer, and Pauline awoke. Starting up, she laid aside her palette and brushes, and bent over him tenderly. Surely he was nearly awake —somehow he did not seem the same as before. He began to be restless. Very tenderly she bent down and kissed his forehead. He had been her own—her very own—all day, and this was her leave-taking. The restlessness increased. and he spoke in a hoarse, weak voice, and as if alarmed:—

"Pauline, Pauline, my darling, be careful."

But still he slept. Oh sweet-sweet words, treasured in the girl's heart through long weary days of separation and grief! She laid her hand upon his forehead, and he sank to rest again.

"Oh! Pauline, dear love, dear love, what should I have done if you had died?"

And again the soft hand soothed him to rest. Soon after he awoke again, and his eyes met hers as she leant over him. He smiled faintly, and then a horror of recollection came over him, but as he looked into her face it passed away.

"Dear," he said, "thank God, you are safe."

"Hush!" she said, smiling, "you must not talk, dear."

A wan smile answered her.

"Have I been ill?" he said.

"Very ill; but, dear, you must not talk."

"I won't, then," he said brokenly, "if you will stay with me."

They looked into each other's eyes for a space.

"Now I must feed you," said Pauline, and she went away to the kitchen for what she wanted. Elsie came back with her, and then came Mrs. Crawfurd. Mrs. Crawfurd wanted to feed him herself, but he had an invalid's whim, and insisted on being fed by Pauline. But the old lady was so overjoyed to see him come back to life that she forgot to be jealous, and even kissed him. Nay more, when Dame Violet came in presently and did the same, she quite passed

over the scandal. Keith got Elsie's hand and held it tight in his, and she had to kiss him between whiles. But he kept looking about as though he wanted something.

"What is it, dear?" said Elsie.

"Tom," he whispered, "I want Tom."

And Tom forthwith produced himself through the open window.

"Well, old man?"

"All right, old fellow, I'm afraid I have given you all a fright."

"Never mind, old man, now you are all right," and then Tom cleared them all out of the room—except the nurse, of course; but Kirsty relieved her when they went to dinner.

After dinner the nurse went back to the patient, and Tom got the rest of the party out on to the terrace in pursuance of his nefarious scheme for leaving Keith and Pauline as much as possible to themselves at this interesting juncture. No match-making mother in Israel could have been more vigilant and circumspect in the prosecution of such a design. But it was a peculiarity of the situation that, whenever the young people found themselves in Mrs Crawfurd's company, they forthwith began to

devise excuses for getting away. So it was not long before Elsie and Violet wandered off along the sandy road by the little bay. Hugh, always uneasy in his mother's presence, and doubly so at this time, was minded to accompany them. But Mrs. Crawfurd, who thought he had been too much with Violet already, called him back, and gave him a trenchant lecture on the impropriety of his conduct.

"I don't know what has come over you, Hugh," she concluded, "you never used to be so led away, and here you have been all day dangling at the apron strings of another man's wife. Anyone, who didn't know you, might have thought you were making love to her. It is positively disgraceful."

Meanwhile Tom was shaking hands with Dr. Anderson, who had joined the group in time to be edified by the concluding sentences of Mrs. Crawfurd's exhortation. He got a pretty fair idea of its drift, though it might have been more coherent with advantage. But then mothers in Israel are usually more or less elliptical in their speech. Scandal, for instance, without ellipsis, would be a very brutal affair.

The doctor stayed a few minutes talking,

instead of going to his patient at once. Of course the talk was about Keith's accident.

"I hope you will never rest, Thomas," said Mrs. Crawfurd, "till you find out who changed those bottles."

"That finding out," said the doctor, "is easier set about than finished, Mrs. Crawfurd. It might turn out that Keith had changed them himself somehow; we must see about it when he is better. You see," he added, turning to Hugh, "the bottles must have been changed after you left . . . . You are quite sure you met no one on the road?"

Hugh had his story ready, and stuck to it, for all the doctor's questions. But he gave his information grudgingly. His *amour propre* was really wounded by the insinuation that he could have had anything to do with the changing of those wretched bottles: so completely had he absolved himself from the transactions of Sunday. It was one of Hugh's peculiarities too, that he never felt himself really guilty of any peccadillo till he had been found out. Just as he was going away the doctor asked carelessly:

"I suppose you did not come back for anything?"

"N—no." Hugh's answer was just a shade long in coming. "No, what should I come back for?"

"You might have left something."

"You did leave your stick, you know," said Tom. "We thought of bringing it, as we expected to take you up on the road. And then we left it for you to get next time you came down."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it is here now."

"Hugh," said Mrs. Crawfurd, as Tom and the doctor went away, "why should you think it beneath your dignity to give any information that might help to discover how this accident happened? You don't know what little circumstances might put them on the track."

This was precisely what Hugh did know, and was afraid of, but it was not his cue to tell his mother so.

"It is all very well," was his answer. "I have told them more than once that I met no one on the road. What more do they want? And why should that fellow Anderson meddle in the matter—it is no affair of his that I can see?"

"My dear boy, it is the duty of everyone, who can do so, to try and throw light on such an

affair. And Dr. Anderson and Keith have always been friends."

"Well, all I know is, I can't be bothered with it. . . And, as for Dr. Anderson, I think it is Dame Violet who is his friend. He seems to have taken more notice of her than of anybody else." Violet had been singing Dr. Anderson's praises all day in the intervals of her talk about Keith and Pauline and Elsie, and Hugh had an uneasy jealous feeling, which broke out in this speech. He thought, too, to divert his mother's attention, forgetting that, from her point of view, Violet, as the married woman of the party, was precisely the person to receive the doctor's instructions.

Mrs. Crawfurd laid down her work and looked steadily at her son, and Hugh, as he saw the intense scorn of her expression, wished heartily that he had held his tongue.

"And what have you been doing all day?" she asked. "You needn't find fault with Dr. Anderson. He, at anyrate, is doing his best for his friend. But you—" And all the pent-up irritation of the day broke out in violent and indignant speech. She had been so sure Keith was married to Violet, but she could believe

that no longer. All her efforts to throw Pauline and Hugh together had failed. And then what appeared to her the levity of Hugh's conduct to Violet constituted the blackest sin in her decalogue—an impropriety. To do the woman justice, she had little knowledge of sins greater than improprieties. The effect of it all was that Mrs. Crawfurd fairly lost her temper in a fit of righteous indignation reinforced by the irritation aforesaid. In her anger she raised her voice, so that Tom and the doctor, to say nothing of the patient, heard her through the open window of the sickroom. Pauline, who was just coming out for a mouthful of fresh air, and Elsie and Violet, who had strolled back to the gate, all had the benefit of her oration. "But you—you can't be bothered. It is your friend who has been poisoned, and you have time and opportunity and intelligence, and you might have employed yourself usefully in finding out the poisoner. . . But no, you can't be bothered. You can only be bothered to follow a silly woman about all day. You can only be bothered making love to another man's wife, leading her into lightness and vanity—a woman who has jilted you too, and you must try to get

her to make love to you—*you*, indeed! As if any woman with any self-respect would have anything to say to such a pitiful fellow. No doubt you think you are very fine with your dandified airs, and your bowing and scraping like a dancing-master, and your fine talk. But let me tell you, you are just a mean, pitiful, fellow. . . . . If you wanted Violet Danby why didn't you take her when you had the chance? Have you no self-respect, sir? And where is *her* self-respect, I wonder, that she lets you follow——"

Mrs. Crawfurd stopped suddenly, confronted by Kirsty whose very mutch trembled with indignation, though she spoke quietly and determinedly.

"Whusht! woman. . . . It's an ill bird that files its ain nest, but Maister Hugh's yer ain son, and ye maun just say yer wull til him, but I'll no alloo you nor onybody else tae misca' Mistress Violet aboot *this* house."

Here Mrs. Crawfurd turned angrily to Hugh:—

"And you stand there, sir, and allow your mother to be spoken to like that! . . . But I will not stay here to be insulted. Go and order

the carriage, sir, at once." (Mrs Crawfurd was not a hysterical woman; she got moral and edifying instead.) "You ought to go down on your knees, sir, and ask God for grace to soften your wicked heart—*you*, a professor of religion, indeed! What have I done that a son of mine should be like this? . . . Pray God, sir, that you may never have to repent of your ingratitude."

She burst into tears and was led away by Kirsty.

As Mrs. Crawfurd's harangue made itself heard in the sickroom, the doctor and Tom exchanged a queer look of intelligence, not unmingled with amusement. When Mrs. Crawfurd made her accusations against Violet, however, the amusement changed to indignation, and both started to go out and interfere. But Tom laid his hand on the doctor's arm.

"There is Kirsty," he said. "Leave it to her."

"Why doesn't he stop her by telling the truth about it?" said Keith, who, of course, heard everything. "But, poor beggar! my uncle is right: he never had a fair chance."

"Here is his chance now," said Tom, "if he would only take it."

"Where is Violet?" Keith wanted to know.

"Down the shore road with Pauline and Elsie."

"Then he won't take his chance this time," when silence supervened Keith spoke again. "What is he going to do now?"

"Going to his wife, I should say," was the doctor's opinion.

"No," said Tom. "He has stopped at the gate."

"It would be the saving of him if he would only bring her up, and own her," said Keith.

"It's no use," said Tom, "here he is coming back again."

"If he really has any spirit," said the doctor, "he will rebel, and let the old lady go home by herself."

"He never was any good in a row, I remember," was Keith's comment on this.

"He has gone round to the stables," said Tom. "They'll have a lively time of it on the road, it strikes me."

"I don't know about that," said Keith, "they will both be in the sulky stage by this time."

"Well, it's over," said the doctor. "And now let us see to you, young man. Your nurse

has done well by you. I certainly never thought to see such an improvement. . . ."

The patient having been duly seen to, Kirsty was put in charge till Pauline should return, and Tom and Dr. Anderson adjourned to the laboratory for a consultation.

"Seems to me," said the latter, "that fellow Crawfurd knows more than he chooses to tell."

"It struck me, do you know, that he rather winced when you asked if he had been back after we left."

"I was not looking directly at him, but he certainly hesitated."

"Could he have been back?" said Tom. "Could he have left that bottle in Miss Carmichael's room, I wonder?"

"Is he given to practical jokes?" said the other. "And besides did he know of your discovery?"

"He could not know about it, I did not tell him, and Keith did not speak to him at all. Keith stayed with Violet, you know. . . . . My word, didn't Hugh look black when he saw Violet!"

"Looked black at her, did he?" Hm. . . .

By-the-by, did you ever ask that maid you got the scent from if she had been in the laboratory at all? She might have been curious to know what you did with it."

"I will call her," said Tom.

Mary presented herself in the course of a few minutes.

"Mary," said the doctor, "do you remember getting some scent for Mr. Tom on Saturday night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you know what became of it?"

"No, sir, Mr. Tom just turned it intil a bottle he had, and gaed awa'."

"Were you in here on Sunday at all?"

"No, sir."

"Were any of the others—Duncan, or Kirsty, or Leezibeth?"

"No, sir, Duncan an' Kirsty wer' in their ain hoose, and Leezibeth was in the kitchen wi' me, excep' ance she went ower tae hae a crack wi' Kirsty. An' there was naebody else aboot the hoose forbye Mr. Hugh Crawfurd."

"And when did Mr. Crawfurd go away?"

"It wad mebbe be half an hoor or mair efter the ithers."

"You are sure of that, Mary?" said the imperturbable doctor.

"Yes, sir. An' that min's me:—I was comin' through the passage there, and this door was opened a wee, an' I seemed tae see through the cheek o' the door a gentleman standin' ower yon'er," pointing to the window. "I didna think ony mair aboot it for a meenit'; but when I sat doon tae ma buik, I minded a' at ance 'at Maister Keith wasna at hame. Sae I went back an' luikit in, but there was naebody there. Sae I thocht I had been mista'en, but I gaed through the hoose tae mak' sure that a' was richt. An' when I cam into the passage I thocht I heard a door sneck at the front. Sae I went into the leebrary, but naebody was there, and syne I went into the hall and saw Mr. Crawfurd just ganging oot at the gate. Sae I thocht the door I had heard wad be him gangin' oot."

The two men exchanged significant glances. Tom was the first to speak.

"Mary," said he, "you have held you tongue about things before now."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, say nothing about this—nothing at all. You understand?"

Mary promised, and, what was more, kept her word.

"Is she to be trusted?" asked the doctor.

"Quite," said Tom. "You know John Thompson, the Elder in the Kirk up there?—well, she is his daughter. Elsie always has girls she knows for her maids; and we have known this girl since she was a child."

"All right. Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think he was here, though what he could want in here I can't imagine. Still he knew nothing of my precious discovery."

"Well, let us put things together," said the doctor. "Where was your bottle?"

"There, where is it now, in the window."

"And Keith's?"

"There, on his desk. I found it on the beach, and put it there for you to see it."

"You are quite sure it was on the desk?"

"Quite."

"Were any of you in here at night?"

"No, none of us, as it happened."

"Yesterday morning, then?"

"No, we were off in the 'Waterwitch' all morning."

"Well," said the doctor, "we come back to

this. Hugh Crawfurd was seen here after you left on Sunday afternoon. When you came back Miss Carmichael's bedroom-door was fastened, and that stuff of yours was found in the room. Suppose Hugh Crawfurd had been in here filling that phial out of yours. He might have changed the bottles."

"But what should he want to put a bottle of lavender-water in her room for? The fellow never jokes."

"Suppose he did not know it was lavender-water, Master Tom? How then?"

"Why, what should he think it was?"

"What it was labelled," said the doctor drily.

"By jove!" was all Tom could say.

"Didn't you say, Tom, that you thought he had taken a fancy to Miss Carmichael?"

"Yes. And I think so now; only she has been out of his way to-day."

"And that he looked black at his wife when he saw her at church."

"Black! He looked as though he could have murdered her where she stood."

"Well, and didn't he tell you he thought Miss Carmichael's room was his wife's?"

Tom stared at his interlocutor:—

"Then you think he meant to—?" . . .

"Exactly," said the Doctor as Tom hesitated. "That was what he meant." After a pause he went on again: "I look at it this way. You say the stopper in Keith's bottle was tight, so he couldn't get that. Then I expect he lighted on yours and was deceived by its similarity to the other, so that in replacing them he changed their positions. Then he left the poison, as he thought it, in what he thought was his wife's room. . . . . What I can't make out is why he came back here in the evening."

"What an infernal shame! And that poor trusting wife of his thinks him an angel too." And Tom took to working off his indignation in pacing rapidly up and down the laboratory, only pausing when he addressed the doctor. "Upon my word, I would like to . . . . . Good gracious! Doctor, he must have seen Pauline with the stuff in her hand, and yet never tried to save her."

"You forget, friend Tom, that, to have saved her, he must have exposed himself, and he will hardly believe in that. If you think of it, it would be better for Miss Carmichael or anyone

else to die, than for such a light in Israel to be shown up as a poisoner. At anyrate your joke has saved one life, though it has nearly cost another."

"I will have no more such jokes," said Tom. "But suppose he repeats this little experiment with his wife when there is no hoax in the case?" and Tom paused for a reply.

"I certainly think," said the Doctor, looking at Tom very steadily by way of emphasising his words, "I certainly think that it would perhaps be as well that Mr. Hugh Crawfurd should have a hint—and a pretty broad hint too (as broad as the toe of somebody's boot, for instance)—that the farther prosecution of his studies in chemistry is not advisable. It's a censorious world, friend Thomas, and, if Mrs. Hugh Crawfurd should die unexpectedly, it is quite possible the authorities might be suspicious if they knew what you and I know."

Some couple of hours later, Keith, waking from a doze, found Pauline bending over him.

"Dearest," he said, "you are quite worn out. You must go and rest."

"Let me stay, dear, till you go really off to sleep for the night."

"And will you sleep well to-night and come and nurse me to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear; and now you must not talk any more," and then she bent over him more tenderly than ever.

"I haven't thanked you for saving my life? Oh! Keith, what makes you so good to me?"

"Am I so good to you? I didn't know it. I hope I would have done the same for any life that was in peril. You shall pay me," he said, taking her hand and looking up into her face with a wan smile, "with a kiss."

In womanly pitifulness she pressed her sweet virginal kiss on his forehead; then rose, like an incarnate Aurora, a rosy dawn of blushes glowing in her face, and tender love-lights flaming in her eyes. But the woman's tenderness conquered the virginal shamefastness as the thought of that terrible peril came over her. The Auroral blushes died out into pallor, and the love-lighted eyes were filled with tears, as she knelt by the bedside.

"But you might have died," she said in a hushed awe-stricken voice.

Keith possessed himself of her hands, which

she had put before her face as if trying to shut out that horrible sight.

"I might," he replied with a quiet smile, "and it would have been worth while."

"Worth while!" she exclaimed, smiling wanly through her tears, "worth while! to throw away your life for mine?"

"Yes, and well worth."

"*I* should not have thought it worth while if you had——" She buried her face in the pillow, unable to finish the sentence. Keith was not so weak but that he could raise the hands he held to his lips.

But, before he could speak, Pauline recovered herself. Gently disengaging her hands, she rose:

"A nice sort of nurse I am," she said, "breaking down like this, and letting you talk."

"You are the best nurse in the world," Keith said eagerly.

"Hush! dear, you have talked too much. See, I will hold your hand while you go to sleep."

"One word more, dear—will you give me that picture."

"Certainly. Now not another word. I don't want my patient to disgrace me."

So Pauline sat there holding Keith's hand. The day waned, and the summer evening deepened round them into night. Then the moon rose, and in the soft light the girl's face shone with a new and spiritual beauty, and Keith, watching from his shadowy corner, saw again his vision of the passing of the Holy Grail.

CHAPTER II.

A COURT OF INQUIRY.

"There may be nothing new under and including the sun, but it looks fresh every morning, and we rise with it to toil, hope, scheme, laugh, struggle, love, suffer, until the night comes, and quiet; and then will wake morrow, and the eyes that look on it, and so *da capo*.
W. M. Thackeray.

KEITH once showed the girls an interesting experiment. A clear liquid in a glass jar had been carefully cooled below its freezing-point, so carefully that it had remained liquid. But at the slightest disturbance of its calm, the clear liquid shivered into a mass of exquisite crystals. "Which things are a parable." The shock of Keith's accident had crystallised Pauline's feelings of liking and *camaraderie* into love. That, up to this time, had been the main result of Hugh Crawfurd's toxicological researches. But, as it happened, a further result had also accrued —that Keith and Pauline had each been sufficiently assured of the other's love, while each was ignorant of having given such assurance. There is no sweeter phase of life than

the time of the love that is not told, and that needs no telling. Then, "love is enough,"—the more sweet for its shyness and reserve, the more gracious for its free giving for giving's sake, the more beautiful for its gentle acceptance of unsought favour and unclaimed tenderness. But such a phase of life is essentially quiet—a pause. In some fortunate lives there are such pauses, in which equilibrium is attained for the time being—when the soul, full of a quiet and tranquil peace, finds rest

> "From too much love of living,
> From hope and fear set free."

Such pauses might be called the sleep of life, which

> "Knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,"

were it not that they seldom occur after the cares of life have once set in. They are rather to be figured as quiet, shady pools above the rapids of the river, where the current flows deeply indeed, but silently and strongly, smoothly also, and none the less strongly that its movement is masked by the silence begotten of its swiftness and depth.

Be this as it may, Pauline's idyll began for her with the morning light in new beauty and

peace. Her life seemed full of a sweet tremulous joy that, taking no thought for the morrow, was sufficient for the day. If the fair world around her had been beautiful before, it was more beautiful now, and all loves were glorified in this new best love of all. As she stood before her mirror she blushed to find herself so beautiful, and the blush lingered to give a softer glow to her cheeks and a deeper lustre to her eyes as she came shyly into Keith's room to resume her charge.

"Ah! my dear nurse," said Keith, "I shall be able to appreciate your attentions to-day. Yesterday, I am afraid, I was such a senseless animal that I took no notice of them."

"You don't look as though you needed any attending to-day," she began, laughingly, but Keith was still pale and wan, and it was with a very wistful smile that she went on:—"And are you really better?"

"Yes, really," he said, "and it is all your doing, Nurse. I have no business to be so well, you know. How do you think Doctors are going to get a living if the nurses take to getting their patients well before their time?" But Keith's expression neutralised the mockery of

his words. "I warn you," he went on, "I don't mean to go on recovering quite so rapidly, to-day."

"If you don't get well, sir," said Pauline, demurely, "I shall resign and somebody else may nurse you—Kirsty perhaps, or Mrs. Crawfurd."

"Not quite so fast, dear nurse, I can always manage a relapse, you know, and then you would have to come back. By-the-by, everybody has been to see me but Elsie—what has become of her this morning?"

"She is not very well, and Dame Violet is making her have breakfast in bed. Dr. Anderson said the Dame was to look after her specially."

"Anderson was right. I shouldn't be surprised if the dear lass were to be ill. I think, my dear nurse, you must try to get me well enough to get up after breakfast, and I will go and see her. I don't suppose Anderson will be able to be here before night."

"Is it wise for you to get up so soon?"

"It is not a question of wisdom—I really must see how Elsie is. To tell you the truth, Pauline, it is quite possible the shock she has had may result in a very serious illness. Mind,

you must not let her know this. I must confess I find myself telling you things I am not much in the habit of telling. However, you can be trusted."

"I will take care," she said with a pretty shyness—partly caused by the fact that Keith had unwittingly called her, for the first time, simply by her Christian name—"I am so glad you can trust me." Then, after a pause, she asked in a low tone: "Have you any idea of how that bottle came to be in the wrong place?"

"Well, I hardly know," said Keith, "but now I must ask you to trust me. I will tell you about it when I can."

"You shall not tell me anything till you think fit. Only let me be of use if I can."

Keith managed, with Tom's assistance, to visit his cousin, with whose condition, he was not particularly well satisfied, though she was not ill enough to have to keep her room. He recommended her to be as much as possible outside, and then proceeded to follow his own prescription. Wrapped up invalid fashion, he sat in a big easychair on the lawn, and had a long talk with Tom about the doctor's ideas of Hugh's proceedings of Sunday.

"I quite agree with Anderson," said Keith, "but if our hint is to be effectual it must be given in such a way that Hugh will see we have the power to act at any time. For instance, Anderson himself would be an important witness, and you know he is talking of going abroad. . . . But here comes my nurse with the soup. I'll tell you what, Tom, let us have another talk in the afternoon, and meanwhile I will try to think of a plan. And another thing, Tom. Couldn't you take their ladyships out for a sail or a drive this afternoon? It would do Elsie a world of good."

"All right," said Tom, as he went away. "I'll carry off the lot."

Pauline gave Keith his soup and watched him eat it, and then at his request she got him a cigar, and even went so far as to light it for him. The cigar duly lighted, she knelt at the side of Keith's chair.

"What has the poor nurse done," she asked plaintively, "that she is to be sent away all the afternoon?"

"The poor nurse ought to have a change," said Keith, looking down into the bonny wistful eyes. "But tell me, dear, would you really rather stay?"

"Yes, dear, let me stay," and Pauline took his hands in hers, and looked up at him so tenderly that Keith was fain to let her have her own way.

"You shall stay, good nurse, but Elsie must go, and will she go without you?"

"I will manage that," she said.

"All right; now go and get them off, and then if you will bring a rug here we will make ourselves comfortable for the afternoon."

When Pauline returned she found that Keith had utilised the interval to get rid of his invalid trappings and resume his ordinary attire.

"I think," he said, "that if I were to get a stick we might almost have a little walk."

"Let me be your stick," she said, taking up the rug he had arranged for her, "and I will take this in case you want a rest."

So Keith leant on her arm to steady himself, and they walked slowly out of the white gate and down the shady slope through the edge of the wood to the little bay; and then Pauline arranged the rug on the sand by a great boulder, and Keith rested. And then they went a little further and Keith rested again; and then they came home. It was not an exciting performance,

but they both enjoyed it, and what could one have more? One thinks of some really happy day in life:—there are not so many that there need be any great embarrassment of choice:—does it not seem as though the happiness sprang from just some such simple, unexpected, tranquil pleasure? A wild winter day of lashing and flouting storm:—a summer noon, all peace and sunshine:—a tender autumn afternoon under a soft grey-blue sky:—happiness is sufficiently independent of the weather. Not much noted at the time perhaps, the day comes in after-life to be marked with the white stone—a memory of peace. Be sure Keith and Pauline remembered this day in the after-years as one of those of which "the illustrious poet saith":—

> "But rather when aweary of your mirth!
> From full hearts, still unsatisfied ye sigh,
> And feeling kindly unto all the earth
> Grudge every moment as it passes by,
> Made the more mindful that the sweet days die."

Howbeit, when they got settled down again Keith was so wearied out by the little excursion that he went off to sleep. And Pauline sat on a rug at his feet and watched him with a quiet contentment that was an unalloyed happiness. She saw the "Waterwitch" far out on the loch,

and thought, with a shudder, of the last time she had watched her set sail:—but:—well, it was over, and the girl lost herself in quiet maiden-dreams. By-and-by the voyagers returned, and Elsie, for the time being, was almost herself again. And when the demoiselles had all vanished into the house together, after their manner, Tom and Keith had their talk.

"You see," said Keith, "if our evidence is to be of any use in an emergency, we must have it written down and properly attested. And yet, at the same time, I don't want their ladyships to see that anything serious is going on. Couldn't you get up a mock inquiry into the affair?"

"The very thing," said Tom. "I'll manage to start it to night."

"My uncle and Mr. Carmichael will be pretty sure to come down to-night; they would get your letter this morning. I will get my uncle to leave the affair in our hands, and you shall make Uncle Harry preside over the court. Anderson will be here, too; we must tell him about it, and keep him for the evening. I suppose Hugh is gone to town?"

"Yes, but he will be back at the end of the week, most likely."

"Well, we shall have time for what I want. Look here, if my uncle is not going back to town this week, you must make some excuse for going up to-morrow. I want you to see Tom Grierson, the writer. You know all that is known about Violet's marriage, and you can explain the circumstances to Grierson without mentioning names. Get him to draw you up a form that would validate the marriage, in case it is not already valid. Find out exactly what signatures are necessary, and what witnesses. Now, do you see how the plan will work?"

"Yes, I see," said Tom, thoughtfully, "and I like it well."

"Only remember, when you have your precious court of inquiry, all the evidence must be written down and attested. You can make that part of the joke."

"I understand," said Tom.

Mr. Keith and Mr. Carmichael duly arrived by the evening steamer. Tom and Violet drove up to the pier to meet them, and, as they came back, Mr. Keith, sitting beside Tom, got a pretty full statement of affairs from him, while Dame Violet gave Mr. Carmichael her version of the story—consisting principally of a vivid description

of Pauline's imminent danger, and what Madame was pleased to term "Keith's heroism."

Dr. Anderson arrived just after the others, and they all adjourned to dinner. They made a pleasant party, but the feast was not without its skeleton. The thought of what the meeting might have been could not but be present to their minds. Some of them thought of Pauline and some of Keith, and all of the woefulness there would have been if either bright young face had been missing from the pleasant circle. After dinner it was too late for the invalids to be out, so they settled themselves in the entrance hall, and there Mr. Carmichael demanded a categorical account of the whole affair from anyone who considered himself or herself competent to give it coherently. This was Tom's chance, and he availed himself of it, to suggest that Uncle Harry should hold a proper judicial inquiry on the subject. The proposal commended itself to everybody as a pleasant way of spending the evening indoors, and it was carried by acclamation. Mr. Carmichael was installed in a large chair at the end of a long table, and Tom with a whimsical appearance of overdoing the thing in his official fussiness

produced pens, ink, and foolscap in alarming quantities.

"I suppose this means business?" the doctor whispered to Keith.

"Yes. It is to carry out your idea of keeping a certain young gentleman out of mischief."

Keith's story was taken first, consisting of an account of his proceedings of Saturday night—of his finding the bottle all right in its place on Sunday morning and not seeing it again till Tom was handing it to Pauline on Monday.

"And then?" said Mr. Carmichael.

"Oh, then," said Keith, simply, "I was under the necessity of claiming my property."

"And then?"

"I am afraid, your Worship, I have no very distinct recollection of what happened after that."

The President complimented Dr. Dunbar on the way in which he had given his evidence, and on the presence of mind, not to say "heroism," he had displayed in claiming his very disagreeable property. This deliverance was received with applause:—it must be confessed, it was a very irregular court of justice—and Dr. Dunbar actually blushed as he precipitately retired to a

seat in the great window, where he found himself beside Pauline. She laid her hand gently on his arm:—

"'Claiming your property,' dear," she said. "Is that the way you talk of what might have killed you?"

But Keith's only answer was a smile.

While Keith had been speaking, Tom had been writing his story. Handing his manuscript to Mr. Carmichael, he proceeded to translate it into the broadest of broad Yorkshire talk, which was almost unintelligible to all the audience except Violet, but it afforded them considerable amusement, nevertheless, especially when Tom hinted broadly that Keith had altered the positions of the bottles in order to have the benefit of his (Tom's) discovery.

Then came Pauline's story:—She had been in the laboratory with Mr. Crawfurd—had told him about the bottles—had not touched it herself—neither had Mr. Crawfurd, who left the laboratory with her and went home—found a strange bottle on the mantelpiece of her room, with scent in it. . . Believed the scent to be the same as Mr. Challoner's discovery. . . . Was not in the laboratory again.

"Was anyone else in the laboratory on Sunday afternoon or evening?"

"I was," said Violet.

This was unexpected evidence, and Keith and Tom and Dr. Anderson were all attention. Dame Violet chose to talk Yorkshire like Tom, and he wrote down what she said, amounting to this:—

She had been unable to go out with the others, and Mr. Crawfurd had been good enough to stay with her—thought the gentleman would like a smoke, so took him to the laboratory. Yes, she spoke to him about the bottle; she told him how Mr. Tom Challoner had wanted to poison her with it in the morning.

This was turning the tables on Tom with a vengeance. But Tom placidly remarked that he had made the recommendation solely in the interests of pure science.

Dr. Anderson wanted to ask a question. Could the witness say which of the two bottles before her, was the one she saw on Sunday night?—"This," she said, selecting the logarithmic formula. Could Miss Carmichael identify the bottle she noticed in the afternoon? Pauline selected the original bottle.

Then the depositions were read over, signed, and attested; and Keith took care that one of the sheets was signed "Violet Crawfurd."

"It seems to me, Master Tom," said Mr. Carmichael as the court broke up, "that these proceedings criminate no one so much as yourself."

"That, my dear sir, is just exactly where the joke comes in," was Tom's unabashed reply. "And now I propose an adjournment to the smoking-room."

When they had got settled in the laboratory Tom proposed that the court should be reconstituted. Mary was brought in, and she told her story, whereat Uncle Harry began to think there was method in this madness. Dr. Anderson followed with his version of affairs, and this further evidence, duly engrossed, signed, and witnessed, was put into Mr. Carmichael's hands for his opinion on the case. His deliverance was characteristic:—

"This is very serious indeed, gentlemen. I have no hesitation in saying that, at some places where I have sojourned in the course of my pilgrimage, Mr. Hugh Crawfurd's proceedings would have entitled him, at the least, to a well-fitting suit of tar and feathers, with probably an

extemporised substitute for Elijah's chariot to follow. Let me illustrate my meaning by an example. There was a man in Shantsville who had a wife, but wanted another woman instead. As the law of the State did not sanction bigamy and he had his own reasons for not moving for a divorce, he gave his wife something that disagreed with her a good deal; she did not die, as it happened, and some friends, who got to know of the occurrence, thought it was a pity the man should not have a funeral at his house when he wanted one. Such a state of things was not consistent with the Constitution of a free country. So they appointed a day for the funeral, and conferred with a committee of leading citizens with a view to having the corpse ready. The corpse was ready, gentlemen, and the funeral took place as arranged. But it was remarked that that man paid no more premiums on his life insurance policy. That will give you some idea of how Mr. Crawfurd's conduct would be looked upon in some places, but your customs here are perhaps different. May I ask what you propose to do? I must confess, too, to a certain amount of curiosity to know what Mr. Hugh Crawfurd has to say to all this."

"I think we can gratify your curiosity," said Keith. "Doctor Anderson has suggested that it might be well if Mr. Crawfurd were to suspend his studies in laboratory practice. We propose to make the suggestion to Mr. Crawfurd on Saturday night. That is, subject to my uncle's approval."

"Yes, I think it is highly necessary he should have some such expression of opinion," Mr. Carmichael rejoined, "but still I wonder what can be his motive?"

"You know the usual motive in such cases, Mr. Carmichael," said Dr. Anderson. "In fact you gave us the motive in the case of the man from Shantsville."

"Yes, but who can it be?"

Neither Keith nor Tom would speak. Dr. Anderson casually remarked:—

"You have a very charming daughter, Mr. Carmichael."

"Oh, is that it, do you think? Well, I will take it upon me to disabuse Mr. Crawfurd of any idea of that sort."

Whereupon the court adjourned till Saturday night.

CHAPTER III.

"OUR MUTUAL FRIEND."

Mrs. Gamp resumed:—
"Mrs. Harris, Betsey—"
"Bother Mrs. Harris," said Betsey Prig,
. . . . . .
"I don't believe there's no sich a person!"
C. Dickens.

THE good Dame Violet, with her English notions, had been somewhat shocked at what seemed to her the avuncular indifference alike to Keith's heroism and his peril. Their greeting to the young man, on their arrival, after what she considered his return from the very gates of death had singularly disappointed her. To Keith, however, their quiet hand-pressure was a mode of thanksgiving exactly in accordance with his feelings. There was a kindly look of pride in his uncle's eyes, and a look of concern on Mr. Carmichael's face that told him they rated his achievement much more highly than he was inclined to do himself. Archibald Keith had never worn his heart upon his sleeve, and Pauline's father was scarcely the sort of

man to be much addicted to sentiment. His cynical talk, however, covered a wealth of real feeling which, though he hid it with scrupulous care, and from most people with distinguished success, could yet be easily deciphered by those who had the key to his language. Uncle Harry, however, did not consider that the exigencies of the situation were satisfied by a few kindly inquires as to Keith's progress towards health. He was really very anxious to mark his sense of the young man's conduct, but he knew, at the same time, that Keith would be too proud to allow himself to be rewarded for what he would consider to have been nothing more than any man's duty under such circumstances. So Mr. Carmichael bided his time, and meanwhile watched the young people narrowly. He saw Pauline's girlish beauty blossoming into womanhood, and had little difficulty in tracing the metamorphosis to its origin: he formed, too, a very accurate opinion of her relations with Keith.

Mr. Carmichael was turning this question over in his mind as he sat in the verandah with Mr. Keith, watching the invalid walking about the lawn, supported by Pauline. Presently the

nurse established her patient in an easychair, and disappeared into the house. In a few minutes she came out again with Elsie, who looked very weak and fragile.

"Let me go to my daddy," said Elsie, and Pauline led her round the verandah. Her father drew her to him, and set her on his knee. "Oh, my daddy," she said wearily, laying her pretty head on his shoulder, "I am so tired,—so tired."

"Now, sweetheart, you must eat this," said Dame Violet, appearing with her latest culinary triumph.

"Oh, I can't eat," said poor Elsie.

"You must try, dear," said Pauline, "you know you can't get well if you don't eat."

"Here, I will feed you, little one," said her father. And Pauline and Violet watched the operation with jealous interest. Then they went away, and Elsie settled herself wearily to rest.

"I think I will go to sleep, my daddy," she said. "I am so tired. But you must not worry: Keith says I shall be better after a time." And in a few minutes she was fast asleep.

"Is Keith's authority to be depended on?" asked Mr. Carmichael.

"Oh, yes. He is not one to speak definitely without knowing, and, besides, Anderson says the same. But they both agree in telling me I must take her abroad for the winter."

"Then we can't do better than all go together. What do you say? We can make our plans suit yours, I daresay."

"That would be very nice, Harry; and I should be glad of the arrangement for Elsie's sake. Your girl will be a companion for her."

"I suppose Keith is going to Vienna this winter?"

"Yes, I think he should take another session there at anyrate. I want him to take a good place in his profession, you know, Harry."

"Well, I don't know that he could do better in the way of preparation. But look here, Archie: I owe the young man a good turn for saving my girl, and I'll be hanged if I see what I can do. Can you suggest anything?"

"Well, I hardly know," said Mr. Keith, meditatively. "You see, Keith is not likely to think he has done anymore than his duty; and he doubtless treasures the idea that he has really and unmistakably served Pauline. Now that feeling

would be in a measure lost to him if he accepted a recompense."

"That is all very well, but how many men would have done their duty under such circumstances? Come to that, one man at anyrate was found wanting:—Hugh Crawfurd must have thought Pauline was in danger on Sunday night, yet he made no effort to save her. And, as for your other notion, I can make him no recompense equal to his service."

"Well, Harry, I will think of it. Perhaps the course of events may work in your favour in this respect." As Mr. Keith spoke he was looking at Pauline, who seemed to be scolding her patient for objecting to his fourth meal that morning.

"My dear nurse," the victim was saying, "just look at the state of the case. First of all, Kirsty rouses me out of an exquisite dream at seven o'clock, and insists on my eating a breakfast that would do credit to a ploughman. At half-past eight, I have to take a regulation breakfast with the rest of you. Then at ten o'clock you bring me lunch number one. Now, it is half-past eleven, and here is lunch number two. At one o'clock, I shall be expected to take

a knife and fork at lunch number three with the family. What the requirements of the afternoon may be, the Lord only knows."

"Well, you must eat this, at anyrate. Dame Violet made it specially for you, and you dare not offend her, you know. Here she comes too. You had better begin, sir, at once."

"Isn't he a good boy?" the Dame wanted to know.

"Oh dear!" Keith groaned with a fine assumption of injury, "talk about petticoat government indeed! I thought a man was free of that so long as he was not married."

"Listen!" said Pauline to Violet, "he isn't good at all. He complains of having to eat too much."

"Why, he hardly eats more than Elsie. Pretty dear! look at her there fast asleep. What are you going to do with her, Master Doctor?"

"Do?" said Keith. "Give her as much air and exercise, sleep and nourishment as she can manage. That is about all we can do at present; and she must go abroad for the winter."

"Ay me!" poor Violet sighed half to herself as she spoke, "and I shall be all alone in the winter!" And she turned to go away.

"Dear Violet!" said Pauline going with her. "You must not be cast down. Perhaps by that time your husband will have announced your marriage, and then you will have lots of friends if you want them."

"I shouldn't want them then; I shouldn't need them at any time if I only had my husband. I can't tell you how lonely it is, day after day, never seeing a soul except my little maid, who comes in the morning to help me. I can manage while I am well, but, if I were to be ill, I don't know what I should do."

"You must love your husband very much," said Pauline, "to bear all you have for his sake. But still, if you were ill, couldn't you send for your mother?"

"No, my mother is an invalid."

"Well, I'll tell you what it is, dear:—I don't know yet what our movements will be this winter. I only know my papa does not intend going back to New York till next year. But I will write to you constantly, and you must write to me; and if you find yourself getting ill, you must let me know at once, and I will come to you for a while."

"Oh! Pauline dear, I could not do that—

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when you are enjoying yourself with your father. And, besides, your father would not like it."

"You do not know my father," was Pauline's answer.

Keith, too, had heard Violet's complaint, and it set him thinking:—

"Alone! Why should she be alone? What an infernal shame it is, to be sure—seems as though Hugh meant being alone again too; and what is to hinder him? The chances are, he has never been seen about her house in daylight, and if anything happened to her he would not be suspected, or it might easily be made to look as if she had made away with herself. It is just as well we are able to give him a hint on the subject. . . . . And yet, I don't altogether like the idea of breaking down a man's self-respect: —I suppose he has some self-respect, though whether it would stand the shock of his knowing he was found out is another matter. . . . . If only he would show some real love for his wife, or even if he would simply acknowledge her, I would let him off without a word. How could we give him the chance, I wonder? . . . . . Only one thing is certain—that poor girl must

not be left at his mercy. . . . . But I don't like the business after all. It seems almost like taking away his last chance of repentance. . . . . And then, again, it is just possible that, when he finds he can get no one but Violet, he might take to her again: he is just the sort of fellow who must have some woman fooling about him. . . . . What on earth did he try this little game on for? I never thought he was a bad fellow, weak as he is. . . . It was well-planned too. If the stuff had been what he thought it was, and the room had been Violet's, she would have been in the churchyard to-day. . . . And I suppose the idea was that I should be blamed for it. It was very neat. With Violet dead, who was to prove she was not my wife? I might have married under a false name. . . . . And I should have been disgraced in Pauline's eyes. I wonder if she would have believed me? . . . Hm! it was a good thing Mary saw him. And yet that might not have come out, especially if Violet had not noticed the bottle for a day or two. . . . I wonder if that was what he intended. Well, I could forgive him that if he would only be good to that poor wife of his. Poor girl! it

is a bad lookout for her any way. One would think she must find him out some time if she lives—if she lives? I shouldn't wonder if that fall has its consequences a few months after this. . . . . What a riddle it all is! Here is a good girl has all her life wrecked as the reward of the most beautiful womanly trustfulness one can think of. . . . . Ah well! I didn't make the world, and I don't suppose I have to manage it. . . . But it seems damned hard. . ."

Pauline very soon came back.

"What a shame it is that Dame Violet's husband does not acknowledge her," was her opening remark.

"I quite agree with you," said Keith, "but I suppose he knows his own business best."

"You have no influence with him, I suppose?"

"No. He and I are not the best of friends."

"Does Mr. Hugh Crawfurd know him? I notice that the Dame always talks to him a good deal when he is here."

"Yes. . . . I should say Hugh knows him more intimately than anyone else. . . . . But I ought to warn you that I am not answering your question quite straightforwardly. I could

not do that without telling more than I have a right to tell."

"Oh! I am so sorry I asked. But couldn't you get Mr. Crawfurd to use his influence?"

"I believe my uncle has already done that."

"Could Mrs. Crawfurd do anything, I wonder?"

"You forget—Mrs. Crawfurd knows nothing about it. You know she did me the honour of supposing I was Violet's husband."

"Yes, I know," said Pauline, "but I never believed that. And Violet contradicted it herself."

"Indeed! When was that?"

"That day you saved me," said Pauline, blushing at the recollection of her question.

"Will you tell me about it?" Keith asked, moved by an impulse he could hardly have explained.

"There is nothing to tell. I was holding your head as you lay on the grass, and Dame Violet wanted to relieve me. And all that talk of Mrs. Crawfurd's came into my head, and I thought that if she were your wife, it was her right to nurse you. So I asked her about it."

"What did she say, then?"

"She said no, and wondered what had put such a notion into my head. She had not heard Mrs. Crawfurd's talk."

"No," said Keith drily, "she has been spared that infliction. . . . And did you go on nursing me?"

"Yes," she said softly, as she thought of that terrible time.

Keith had no great acquaintance with women in general, but he read the significance of this particular incident with fair accuracy, and he saw too that Pauline was far from seeing all the drift of her words. He would probe this innocent woman-soul no more. But something he must say to turn her thoughts.

"Pauline," he said, taking her hand, "you are very good to me. How can I ever repay you?"

"Nay," she said, kneeling by the side of his chair, "how am I ever to repay you? But. indeed, I don't think I shall try. I shall just let you be as good to me as ever you like, and I shall treasure it all up as my own."

Keith was getting quite accustomed to having this pretty figure kneeling by the side of his chair. It was a favourite attitude of hers. He

had often thought how pretty it was when he had seen her with her father or his uncle, Elsie or Violet, in this sweet position of humility, but it had never seemed so beautiful as now, when he was thus favoured himself; and he was hardly likely to grumble that, during his convalescence, she was getting into a habit of adopting the attitude on any occasion that served for it.

"I shall have to be very good to you," he said smiling, "to deserve such gratitude."

They did not talk much more. It was enough for them to be together in this glorious mid-summer sunshine, with all the beauty of the mountain-land around them. Pauline rested her arm on the chair and her cheek on her hand, and looked over on the dream-like beauty of the far-off hills; and Keith, watching her face, saw again his vision of the Sangreal. He had come to look for it whenever the girl lost herself in this rapt ecstasy of nature-worship. And no spell so availed to bring the woman-soul to her face, as the shifting lights and shadows of those southern hills. But the vision never lost its mystical sacredness for the young man. He could not have put his thoughts into words perhaps; but perhaps he felt the idea all the more

for that. After watching for it, he looked no more when he saw the vision had come. It was like looking on a naked soul. He felt that not even love could give him the right to look with curious eyes into these quiet depths of womanhood. But none the less he waited for the vision—watched for the lifting, as it were, of the veil of Isis, and prostrated his soul in the presence of the awful goddess.

And now the vision passed, and gradually Pauline's thoughts came back to Violet. She pondered over her friend's difficulty, and at length came to a conclusion :—she would speak to Hugh Crawfurd herself.

There was a plash of oars, and they were aware of a boat coming round the point—and in the boat Hugh Crawfurd. So that Pauline's opportunity seemed to have come sooner than she had expected. Hugh would have been better pleased to have seen Pauline and Keith on less confidential terms with each other; and the reflection that he had helped to bring about this mutual understanding did not make the sight of it any pleasanter to him. To his great surprise, however, he got a much warmer welcome from Pauline than ever he had received

from that young lady before. The sweet hypocrite, indeed, would have smiled on Sathanas himself, if she had thought that worthy was serving her friend. Keith's words had given Hugh the character of Violet's friend, who was serving her and keeping her secret, and that was in itself a passport to Mademoiselle Pauline's regard. It is difficult to see what else Keith could have said, unless he had told her outright that Hugh was Violet's husband. As far as winning Pauline for himself was concerned, all his scruples had vanished in the light of the fact that she loved him. But he could not allow himself to tell Hugh's secret without Hugh's permission—and for that he would not stoop to ask. All the same, his words created a false impression in Pauline's mind, and Hugh Crawfurd reaped the benefit of it. Pauline showed herself quite ready to talk to Hugh as much as ever he liked, but it was not till well on in the afternoon that she got an opportunity of speaking to him about Violet:—it was quite a confirmation of her theory that Hugh was monopolised by Violet for the greater part of the time. She had formed quite a neat little theory of the case, and her hypothesis

readily accounted for all the phenomena which puzzled her, which is all that can be expected of a theory—if one comes to think of it. Pauline's mistake really arose out of Keith's words. Her idea was simply this:—that Violet had been married privately to Hugh's brother James during that young gentleman's visit to Glasgow in the spring. Considering that James Crawfurd the younger was now in New York, at once accounted very simply for Violet's loneliness, and opened up a prospect of helping her. Violet's dread of Mrs. Crawfurd and her companionship with Hugh—to say nothing of Keith's reticence on the subject—all became clear in the light of this idea.

In the afternoon they all went for a walk round the bay. Keith and Elsie were not able to go very far, and Pauline stayed with them while they rested instead of going on with the others, who were to take them up on their way back. Just as these others returned to their resting-place, Pauline asked Keith in a whisper to look after Violet, as she wanted to speak to "Mr. Crawfurd." And so Hugh found himself walking with Pauline, apparently by accident, and naturally he was nothing loth to fall behind the

others. Mademoiselle was wonderfully gracious, and Hugh began to flatter himself that he had made an impression—a favourable impression—upon his companion; and this before they were fairly out of earshot of the others. Such were the hypocritical wiles of this young lady. Poor Hugh! he was soon to be undeceived. At last Pauline considered they were safe from any chance of being overheard, and she opened her attack forthwith:—

"Dr. Dunbar tells me, Mr. Crawfurd, that you are intimate with Dame Violet's husband?"

To say that Hugh was taken aback by this mode of address, would but feebly express its effect on his mind. Some homely vulgarism, such as "flabbergasted" or "struck all of a heap," would give a much more accurate rendering of his feelings. The fact was, Hugh could follow out an arranged course of action well enough, but an emergency found him vacillating and irresolute. There were several questions he would have liked to have had answered before replying:—How was it Keith had told her so much and no more? What had Keith really told her? What was she driving at? Altogether Hugh was in a quandary. But it was not his

habit to face the situation one way or another, and his native irresolution reinforced his instinct of concealment.

"Well," he said, forcing a smile, "what of that, Miss Carmichael?"

Pauline thought his hesitation arose from a doubt as to whether he could trust her. She proceeded to reassure him.

"I am not asking questions out of mere curiosity. I wanted to ask you to use your influence with her husband to get him to acknowledge her. It is such a false position for a woman to be in. How many people, I wonder, would have acknowledged her marriage as Mr. Keith and Elsie have done? Not many, I know. And now Elsie is ill, and Mr. Keith will have to take her away for the winter; and then Violet will be all alone. I am sure that lonely life cannot be good;—why it is enough to kill her almost. You will try what you can do for her, won't you, Mr. Crawfurd?"

Pauline looked into Hugh's face with tear-dimmed, beseeching eyes, and he thought her more beautiful than ever. It was very nice to have her looking at him like that; he thought he would have some more of it.

"I quite agree with you," he said. "It cannot be good for her. I will gladly do what I can, but I doubt if that will be of much use. I don't think the marriage can very well be acknowledged at present. There are difficulties in the way."

"I suppose there are difficulties," said Pauline, "but a man who is good for anything gets over difficulties. Does he really love her?" she added, looking very straight at Hugh, "or is he a poor, weak, selfish sort of mortal who can only think of himself?"

This was not so pleasant, Hugh thought, and he hastened to close the conversation.—

"Well, I don't think so badly of him as that, and I will see what I can do. I will let you know how I get on, if you like."

"Yes, do," she said.

"Perhaps it will be as well if you do not mention this to Violet," was Hugh's next move. But Pauline interrupted him:—

"Oh dear, no. I never dreamt of such a thing. I would not have her know that I interfered."

Hugh was inclined to congratulate himself on the result of this conversation, in enabling him

to establish confidential relations with Pauline. But if he had known that after leaving him she went straight to Keith and told him all about the interview, the knowledge would scarcely have increased his satisfaction—especially if he had heard the conclusion of her story.

"—— And do you know, I could not help feeling he was not quite honest about it, somehow."

"Oh, indeed!" said Keith, smiling. "Who would have thought that pretty head was so shrewd? But never mind. You have done what you could, and it is just possible that you have done some good. I hope you have."

But if Keith had spoken his thoughts in full he would have added:—"But I don't think so." In truth any new-formed ideas Hugh may have had, as to settling down with Violet, were dissipated by this new chance of pursuing his designs with regard to Pauline. It was quite evident that she did not know about the marriage, and for the rest he must trust to the chapter of accidents.

However, Hugh had another confidential interview to go through. Mr. Carmichael appeared no less willing than his daughter to

bear him company. Curiously enough he chose to discourse on the same theme, and was apparently equally ignorant of Hugh's relationship to Violet. He had adopted this tone in the hope that Hugh might speak of his marriage, when, of course, there would no longer be any necessity to put an interdict on the young man's intercourse with Pauline. But Hugh jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Carmichael had also been kept in ignorance of his marriage, and so naturally he had no inclination to avow it. He responded to Mr. Carmichael's talk in the character he had assumed with Pauline, as an interested third party, who was doing his best for Violet's interests. It was some little time before Uncle Harry quite realised the drift of Hugh's talk, but when, to his intense amusement, he did make out the situation, he forthwith proceeded to humour the young man to the top of his bent.

"So, then, you are quite in the confidence of both parties," he said, in answer to some remark of Hugh's, "and they have really to rely upon you for their means of communication at times?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't it strike you that you have a great power in your hands by that very fact—that you could, in a measure, compel the husband to do right, by declining to have anything more to do with the affair except upon your own terms? It is only a secret, I suppose, as long as you choose to keep silence?"

Here Hugh thought he saw his way to a stroke of policy. It was clearly his interest that the fiction of his mediatorship should be kept up as long as possible. What better means to that end than the creation of difficulties?

"Well, yes," he said, "to a certain extent. But if I were to say anything about it, I might have to prove the marriage, and I am not quite sure that that would be easy without the husband's co-operation."

"Do you mean that the marriage is not legal?"

"Well, I cannot say that I could see my way to proving it, as things stand. It would be awkward, to say the least, to raise a row and then find the girl was in a false position after all. Besides, I very much prefer persuasion to force in this affair. You may depend upon it, I will do my best for the girl, as far as my influence goes."

"Ah, you are doing your best for her, but your hands are tied. Is that so?"

"Yes, that is the state of the case."

"Well, but what ties your hands? You are not in love with Violet yourself, surely?"

"Oh no," said Hugh, "I am not in love with her. Only, finding myself in a position to help her, I should like to be of use as occasion serves."

Mr. Carmichael let the conversation drop in sheer disgust. Just before they joined the rest of the party, he spoke *à propos* of things in general.

"By-the-by, Mr. Crawfurd, let me give you a hint. I noticed you were having a long talk with my daughter this afternoon. Just don't get talking to her too much. You young men are so inflammable that it is the truest kindness to speak before any harm is done. I have already made up my mind with regard to Pauline's future; you may take it as a kindness that I have told you this. I understand you are to dine here to-morrow night with your parents; if you wish to say anything further on this subject, speak to me to-morrow night. Good afternoon."

Mr. Carmichael went off abruptly, without giving Hugh a chance of replying—and, truth to say, he had no reply ready. He very soon got into his boat to go home. As soon as he got round the point, out of sight of the house, he lay on his oars for a "think." He had established confidential relations with Pauline: so far, good. Then her father knew nothing of his marriage: good again. But what did that last speech mean? Perhaps he had better take the advice for the present. Meantime Violet should go to Scarsdale. Come to the worst, he could tell her the marriage was not legal, but that would not do while she was with the Keiths. Then what was to hinder him from following Pauline to New York? His brother James would be very glad to change places with him. Out there, there would be no one to contradict his story.

And having thus succeeded in working out his problem to his satisfaction, this edifying young man resumed his oars, and rowed himself home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VEHMGERICHT.

"Eyesight and speech they wrought
For veils to the soul within:
They gave him a time for thought,
A time to serve and to sin:
They gave him a light in his ways,
And love,—and a space for delight,
And beauty, and length of days,
And night,—and a sleep in the night."

A. C. Swinburne.

AFTER dinner, the committee "*re* Hugh Crawfurd" met for a consultation in the laboratory and to receive Mr. Thomas Challoner's report of his mission to Glasgow. Tom had come back provided with the required document, but more satisfactory was the lawyer's opinion that the marriage was in itself sufficiently valid. This announcement brought from Mr. Carmichael an account of his conversation of the afternoon with Mr. Hugh Crawfurd. The friends all considered that this latest attitude of this young young gentleman increased the gravity of the situation. They all shared Keith's reluctance to do anything which might impair Hugh's self-respect, but it became apparent that, so

far from there being any likelihood of reconciling him to his marriage, Violet's life was not safe in his keeping. They came to the conclusion that their original plan must be carried out, but reserved for after-consideration the question whether—the marriage once assuredly validated—they should, or should not, acquaint the poor wife with her husband's miserable plot against her life. It was agreed, however, that Hugh should have one last chance to right himself: that on the next evening, after dinner, Mr. Keith should endeavour to induce him to acknowledge his wife there and then, or at least to allow his father to be made acquainted with the fact of his marriage. These decisions arrived at, this nicotian council broke up.

Tom had brought down a frame for the sketch Pauline had painted on the day of Keith's unconsciousness. When the conference ended, Mr. Keith and Tom Challoner went away, discussing certain business matters, and Uncle Harry stayed behind watching Keith as he put the picture into its frame.

"It looks well, does it not?" said Keith, as he put the framed sketch on the easel and stepped back to admire it.

Very well—very well indeed. What is Polly going to do with it? She ought to give it to you, I think."

"She has given it to me," said the young man very gently. "It was very good of her."

"Well, I think you had a very good right to it, Keith, my boy." And Mr. Carmichael laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and made a little pause before he went on. "When I think of what would have happened but for your promptitude, and of what you risked for yourself, I can find no words to thank you."

"I need no thanks, Mr. Carmichael," was Keith's answer. "It is reward enough to have served her. I am only too glad that I was privileged to have the opportunity."

"Yes, I understand all that, and I daresay you understand my feelings in the matter. But all the same, I should like you to keep in mind that, if ever I can serve you, I shall feel grateful if you will allow me to do so—even to the extent, I think under the circumstances, I may say it to you, even to the extent of giving you Pauline."

Keith turned round with his face in a glow.

"Do you really mean that, Uncle Harry?"

"Yes. I really mean that. There is no one I would more gladly give her to."

"But. . . . . But I have no right to take such an advantage of an accidental service."

"Look at it this way, my boy: the advantage is as much mine as yours. You know something of the special precariousness of my life." Keith nodded. "You can understand, then, the comfort it would be to me to know my good girl was in safe keeping. It may be a satisfaction to you to know that I had made up my mind on this subject before the accident. Your uncle and I were talking of it on Sunday."

"It is a great satisfaction. . . . . God knows I love her, and I think she cares for me. . . . But I don't know how ever I could have asked you for her as things stand. . . . . Even now I hardly know if I have the right———"

Mr. Carmichael interrupted:—

"You have every right, as I look at it, though your scruples are perfectly justifiable in their way. In fact you would not be the man I take you for, without them. I know you, my lad, very much better than you think. . . . Now I have a favour to ask from you. You know Polly is a girl yet, in spite of her womanly ways and her

one-and-twenty years. I want you to leave her to me as long as you can. As long as she is a girl, she is mine; when she becomes a woman, she will be yours, if I know anything of her. Let me have my bonnie girl a little longer, Keith."

Keith said nothing, but held out his hand, which the elder man grasped warmly; and the bargain was sufficiently ratified without further words. They talked no more for a time, but sat smoking quietly in the gathering dusk, looking out through the open door over the deserted lawns and the coldly-shimmering breadths of the quiet loch to the mists that hung low on the slopes of the circling hills; while as centre to the picture the shapely "Waterwitch" lay at her moorings,

> As idle as a painted ship,
> Upon a painted ocean,

and with a painted "Waterwitch" below her.

It was nearly dark when Mr. Carmichael spoke again—as if there had been no hiatus in the conversation any more than in the sequence of his thoughts.

"It is something, you know, my lad, to have the opportunity of making anyone happy in this world. The philosophers may say what they

like, but happiness is the great gain of life; and there is no happiness like that which comes of the love of man and woman—if the love be real, which is making a very considerable supposition. Even when the love is not returned it is worth something to the lover. I have met with cases of real love in my pilgrimage, and perhaps have set the more store by them, that I have not myself been blessed with the supreme felicity. . . . . And yet," he went on more slowly, " I have been favoured above many. . . . It was given to me to love a good woman. And I think, as I look back upon it, after all these years, that that broken love has been the great possession of my life. . . . . What my life would have been if I had won her, I do not know. . . . I do know this—that the man who did win her, lived a life worth living, though it was too soon cut short. . . . And I know this too—that if I had to live my life again, I would love the same woman, even if I knew beforehand that I should not win her. It is something when a man has faced the worst—or the best—that life can bring to him. After that he has the freedom of the world—he is no longer an entered apprentice; he is a past-master in the

craft and fellowship of the world's labour and sorrow. You have passed the Tyler and know what I mean. . . . But, still, one would rather have the happiness; and that lot, I hope, will be yours. For, that Pauline loves you, I am certain; and she is leal and true-hearted as ever woman was. God deal with you as you deal with her! . . It is a burden I am laying upon you: the burden of a woman's welfare. . . . If I thought you unworthy——but I am not afraid of you. You will be good to my good girl."

"God deal with me as I deal with her!" Keith said, in a low voice.

"Then God will deal well with you, I believe. . . . . One word more—it will be a bond between us—the woman I loved was your mother."

"My mother?"

"Yes. Helen Keith. Do not think, my dear lad, that I grudge her to your father. He was well worthy of her, as none should know better than I, for I was his friend. And so, when I saw how things were between these two, I went away, and they never knew why: it would only have been a grief to both of them. Even your Uncle Archie never guessed; he took up the

notion that I had been refused by Mary Huntly. That was not true, but it did not matter. The man who had loved Helen Keith was not likely to fall back on Mary Huntly.'

"Mary Huntly? Why, surely that must be Mrs. Crawfurd?"

"Exactly. You don't suppose she has been Mrs. Crawfurd all her life? She was young once and had blood in her veins. . . . But there! we have talked enough sentiment for one night. Let us go to the others."

As they went round the house they noticed the night was setting in wild and gusty.

"I doubt the weather is going to break," Mr. Carmichael remarked. "Will it make any difference in the Crawfurds' coming to-morrow night?"

"No," said Keith, "I don't suppose it will. We are not much given to troubling ourselves about the weather in this part of the world."

The Saturday was a wild, windy, rainy day. Tom availed himself of the ladies' enforced detention in the house to propose "a small game," which he advocated on the ground that it was "less sinful than playing cards by daylight." His game was a modification of a certain

fatuous diversion which had been a feature of Mrs. Crawfurd's Dorcas parties on several occasions. For the "consequences," Tom substituted sham marriage certificates, the blanks in which were filled up by different writers in ignorance of each others' handiwork. Names of the present company were not to be used, except that each was at liberty to use his or her own name in any way that might be considered desirable. This last permission was only taken advantage of in one case. Tom had arranged that Violet should sit between Keith and himself, and in the course of the game he handed her a paper which apparently as a great favour he allowed her to see, and to see in full. Violet, seeing that the paper married her to Hugh Crawfurd, blushed and laughed pleasantly, and signed the document, whereupon Keith and Tom signed their names also as witnesses.

"Don't tell anybody, you know," Tom whispered, as though the secrecy were part of the joke.

"I may tell Hugh, mayn't I?" she whispered in return.

"Well, perhaps we'll show it him," said Tom. "He ought to sign it, and then the thing will be quite complete."

Curiously enough, this paper, when the certificates came to be read out, was missing, and furnished no part of the amusement caused by their felicitous and infelicitous combinations. Games were not much in vogue with these young people, and a very little of this one was more than enough for them. That little, however, had been sufficient for Tom's purpose. Dame Violet, in fact, had taken for granted that the certificate was simply a pleasant little attention on his part, but it had the effect, for all that, of making her feel for the rest of the afternoon as though her marriage were already acknowledged. She told her husband about it in the evening, with a pretty shyness that ought to have been enough to make Hugh acknowledge her on the spot. That young man, however, was not so easily moved by other people's feelings. When he found that the paper had not been read out with the others, he was graciously pleased to express a certain amount of amusement, but in his secret heart he strongly resented the liberty that had been taken with his name. However, it might have been worse, he thought, and considered the affair at an end when he further understood that all the papers had been

torn up when the game ended, many of them still unread. It never occurred to him that the matter was anything more than a joke, but he trembled to think of that paper being read in Pauline's hearing. In fact, he could have wished that young lady less shrewd—for the time being, at least. After dinner, Violet found herself beside her husband's father, who seemed as though he could not sufficiently show his interest in her. Her forlorn position, as he considered it, appealed to his sympathies all the more that there was an old friendship between the two; while Violet would have liked nothing better than to have taken the old man's hand in hers and to have told him what a loving daughter she would be to him. James Crawfurd was austere, but Violet had found out that beneath his dogmas and formulas there was a real human and loving heart. However, she had to keep the secret, but it had never been such a burden to her. She made up her mind to ask Hugh to let her tell his father about their marriage, and that, if Hugh refused, she would go home at once; she would not endure another meeting with the old man unless she could tell him all.

Meanwhile, in the library, Mr. Keith was

urging the same course of action upon Hugh, but without success. So long as Pauline and her father were in ignorance of his marriage, he had no intention of throwing up the game; though, of course, he did not put it that way to Mr. Keith. Had he but suspected Mr. Carmichael's knowledge of his position, he might have been amenable to Mr. Keith's mentorship. But, even in that case, his native irresolution, and his dislike of anything involving exposure of the part he had been playing, would still have held him back from decisive action. The thought of what Pauline would think of his deception, reinforced by the certainty that his father would insist on the immediate acknowledgment of the marriage, was in itself sufficient to keep from making the avowal desired by Mr. Keith. For there was Little Zion and its talk—how could he face that? It was in vain that Mr. Keith spoke of Violet's anomalous position, put before him a man's duty in the case, and pointed out the advantage of making the disclosure among sympathising friends, offering to break the news to Mr. and Mrs. Crawfurd himself, and to help Hugh pecuniarily in the event—the improbable event, he considered it—of untoward conse-

quences. Hugh had some plausible excuse ready at every turn. At last Mr. Keith announced that in any case he could not feel justified in being a party to the secret much longer, and the misguided young man so far forgot himself as to hint that in such a case Mr. Keith might find himself under the necessity of proving the marriage, and might not find the proof altogether easy.

"I am sorry for you, Hugh," said Mr. Keith. "You are putting away from you honour and love, all that makes life worth living. Where is your honour, that you can even think such a thing of the woman who has trusted you? Where is your heart, that you cannot see her great worth? . . . Ah, well! you must go your own way, but, believe me, her life will be required at your hands."

So they crossed the hall and joined the others in the saloon.

"There is no help for it; you must do what you can," Mr. Keith said to his nephew and Uncle Harry, after telling them of Hugh's threat.

Hugh got hold of Tom and proposed that they should go to the laboratory and smoke. Tom

called Dr. Anderson, and their departure was the signal for Keith and Mr. Carmichael to follow them.

The laboratory had been prepared for the occasion. Keith's secretaire had been pushed up against the wall by the door, and in its place stood a long table covered with a green cloth, on which were set out sundry decanters with glasses, pipes, tobacco, and cigars, and a bright, well-trimmed lamp. Some half-dozen chairs were ranged round the table, and Pauline's easel, with the framed sketch on it, stood a little to one side, near Keith's desk.

Mr. Carmichael took his seat at the further end of the table :—

"Just sing out for some hot water, Tom," said he. "Help yourself, Doctor;—help yourself, Mr. Crawfurd."

Dr. Anderson took the chair at the other end of the table; Keith sat sideways near the door, apparently for the sake of looking at his picture; while, on the further side of the table, Tom sat next Uncle Harry, and Hugh opposite Keith, next the Doctor.

In course of time the conversation turned on the events of the last week. Mr. Carmichael

began to chaff Tom on his being criminated by the evidence of the Drawing-room Court of Inquiry, and Dr. Anderson suggested that, if Mr. Crawfurd's evidence were taken, it might perhaps have the effect of bringing Tom's guilt home to him.

"You have no objection, I suppose, Mr. Crawfurd?" said the president.

"No," said Hugh, "I don't know that I have; except perhaps that I don't happen to know anything about the business."

Keith got writing materials from his table and handed them over to Tom, and that worthy prepared to take down Hugh's evidence as he gave it.

Hugh concluded his narrative with his first departure from Rosebank.

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Carmichael.

"That is all," said Hugh.

"When did you get home?"

"Oh, very soon. I saw the others drive by."

"You met no one by the way, I understand?"

"No one. I went by the beach."

Mr. Carmichael liquored up, thoughtfully.

Then he leant his elbows on the table, and pressed his finger-tips together, still meditating. Then, looking directly at Hugh, he remarked blandly and deliberately :—

"But you have told us nothing of what you did when you came back—just after the others went away."

If there had been in any of their minds the least doubt as to Hugh's having come back to Rosebank on that Sunday afternoon, that doubt was resolved into certainty. Hugh sat speechless, quelled into silence by the president's fixed penetrating gaze. He seemed to be trying to speak, but the denial died out on his lips as he unavailingly strove to avert his eyes. Suddenly he rose and made for the nearest door, only to find Dr. Anderson there before him—leaning placidly against it with his hands in his pockets—and Tom between him and the other.

"That is of no use, Mr. Crawfurd," said Mr. Carmichael. "You had better resume your seat. I may tell you beforehand that we have no evil intentions towards you."

Finding resistance useless, Hugh sullenly complied, and the question was repeated :

"What did you do when you came back ?"

Hugh made no answer; he sat looking down, and might have been deaf for any consciousness he showed of having heard the question. A further repetition still brought no response. The president took another measure.

"As Mr. Crawfurd does not choose to speak, perhaps, Dr. Anderson, you will be good enough to refresh his memory?"

The Doctor took up his parable, speaking with a deliberate convicting emphasis that gave great effect to his words:—

"When Mr. Crawfurd came back here on Sunday afternoon, he found a small phial on the table near the window. This he emptied, preparatory to filling it from a bottle that stood on Dr. Dunbar's desk. The stopper of the bottle, however, was refractory, and he really filled his bottle from another—exactly similar in appearance—which he found in the window. This last bottle he filled up at the tap, and as he did so the water ran over the label and made the ink spread. In replacing the two bottles Mr. Crawfurd—unconsciously, no doubt—exchanged them: a proceeding which had consequences. After leaving the laboratory, Mr. Crawfurd entered the house and found his way into one of

the ladies' bedrooms. For reasons best known to himself, he fastened the door of this room behind him. Leaving his phial on the mantel-shelf of this room, he got out of the window and went away. Curiously enough, in this room there was an article of dress belonging to Mrs. Hugh Crawfurd. It must be further observed that, when Mr. Crawfurd came back to Rosebank in the evening, he showed himself to be under the impression that the bedroom in question belonged to his wife."

A dead silence followed the Doctor's speech. So far, Hugh had shown no consciousness of what was said or done around him. The others waited. Never had the evidence seemed so damning as in the Doctor's curt, incisive, matter-of-fact statement: surely Hugh would make some effort at denial or extenuation! At last Mr. Carmichael put the question to him directly:—

"Have you nothing to say to all this, Mr. Crawfurd?"

Hugh vouchsafed no answer. The question was repeated and repeated and repeated again, but Hugh maintained his sullen silence, and again there was a pause in the proceedings. Then Mr. Carmichael spoke again in a last effort

to elicit some sign of contrition or some palliation of the offence.

"Silence is said to give consent, and the maxim particularly applies to such cases as the present. By the merest chance you have been mercifully saved from the crime—I wish I could say 'from the guilt'—of murder. From the evidence in our possession, borne out by your own demeanour to-night, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that your poor wife was your intended victim. As it happened, if you had been able to fill that phial from the original bottle, as you intended, my daughter would have been lying in the churchyard to-day; and, as it is, Dr. Dunbar has actually been brought to death's door by your manipulations. Three lives have been threatened by your mad conduct, and it is only by the great mercy of God that none of them have been lost. It will be well for you to remember that Dr. Dunbar, in his heroic rescue of my daughter, also rescued you from the legal consequences of your action. You have reason to be thankful, above all men, that you have been so providentially saved from the natural results of your wickedness. . . . . .

"We have no intention of instituting any legal proceedings against you. You will have, we believe, sufficient punishment in your own conscience. . . But we have thought it necessary to provide against any recurrence of this performance. And so we warn you that we have all the evidence of your present attempt upon your wife's life duly attested in writing, and that, should we at any time see cause for doing so, that evidence will be placed in the hands of the proper authorities. You can imagine the result of such a proceeding for yourself. . . . . But surely, Mr. Crawfurd, you will not oblige us to think so badly of you! Is there nothing you can say to give a less painful aspect to this affair?"

As Mr. Carmichael proceeded, Hugh's head sank lower and lower, till it rested in his hands on the table. To the final adjuration, he returned no answer for a time, and they all waited in silence. Then Hugh raised head and, for the first time, noticed the picture. He stared at it as if fascinated—with a white, drawn, ghastly face. It brought back to him the memory of the sunset he had seen from Violet's window, and the old words came surging up in his mind:—

"Night comes so soon."

How nearly had he brought down the dark night of death upon these fair young lives! And then, as before, the other words followed, with their wild and wailing cadence:—

"Till I shall be sleeping,
In the cold, dark grave."

And the thought of all the evil he had so nearly wrought came over him like a great wave. Still, looking at the picture, he spoke tremulously and hoarsely in a low, broken voice:—

"It is not all true. I can only say this: I don't know why I took the poison, and I did not intend to leave it. I did not know till I got home that I had left it. You may believe it or not, but that is the truth."

"I believe I am only expressing the feelings of all present," said Mr. Carmichael, "when I tell you, Mr. Crawfurd, that I am very glad to hear that—very glad indeed. We will not trouble you to substantiate your statement in any way, and I can assure you the secret shall be most religiously kept. . . But we think there is some reparation due to your friend Dr. Dunbar, who has so nearly lost his life in this affair. I am sure you will be ready to show your sense of Dr. Dunbar's forbearance towards you."

"I will do what I can," said Hugh, in the same hoarse whisper.

"Well, Dr. Dunbar wants nothing for himself —not even an apology—but only that you should try to improve your wife's position. I suppose it is not convenient for you to acknowledge the marriage at present?"

"I will try," Hugh said, very faintly.

"That is enough. We will not be hard upon you, but will leave the time to your own discretion for the present. But you have expressed doubts as to the validity of the marriage, and what we want you to do is to sign a document we have prepared which will validate the marriage in any case; though perhaps I ought to mention that we have taken a legal opinion on the matter, and the probability is that the marriage is valid as it stands. However, will you oblige us by signing the document?"

"Yes," said Hugh.

The document was produced from Keith's desk and Hugh signed it, and his signature was duly witnessed by Keith Dunbar, M.D., and Thomas Challoner, in the same way as Violet's had been. Then the papers were put away. The next phase of the proceedings was a general handshaking with Hugh.

"For God's sake, Hugh," said Mr. Carmichael, when his turn came, "get out of this deception before it ruins you. Mark me!—you will assuredly come to grief, if you are not good to that wife of yours."

The door opened and Elsie and Violet came in together.

"Are you people hatching a conspiracy?" said Elsie; but, before anyone could answer her, Violet caught sight of Hugh's pale face. She startled them all with a little cry of dismay.

"Oh, Hugh, my poor boy!" she said, "what ever is the matter with you? You look so ill." And she went round to him and kissed him. "My poor dear Hugh!"

The men looked at each other and went out without a word, taking Elsie with them, and the husband and wife were left alone.

"If he has any real grit in him," said Mr. Carmichael to the others, as they went down the passage, "he will acknowledge her before us all, at once; and if he doesn't do it to-night, I doubt if he will ever do it of his own accord."

"He won't to-night, at anyrate," said Keith. And Keith was right.

CHAPTER V.

A PARTING.

"Do I view the world as a vale of tears
Ah! reverend sir, not I."

R. Browning.

LIFE at Rosebank resumed its wonted idyllic calm. The days flew by amid its peaceful beauty, like the changes of a pleasant dream. Arrivals, departures, changes in the weather were its events. Keith devoted his days to the girls, especially to watching over Elsie's slow recovery; and gave the greater part of his nights to work. Pauline sketched out of doors in fine weather, and on wet days painted in the laboratory-studio. Tom went backwards and forwards between Rosebank and the city; everyone sorry when he departed, everyone glad when he returned: he was a sort of incarnate sunshine, and his absence was felt like a cloud. When the time arrived for the elders to have the holiday Mr. Keith had spoken of, Mr. and Mrs. Challoner and Mary came down to Loch Dhuil, while Tom and Keith took up their abode in Bankside

Crescent for the greater part of each week. In spite of their separation from their respective lady-loves, the young men were strongly suspected of enjoying this time better than anybody else. That they should be up to everything that was going on about town—what pieces were being played in the theatres; what music was to be put in rehearsal for the winter concerts of various choral societies; *et hoc genus omne*—was only what might be expected. They had even, on one occasion, been to church, but it afterwards transpired that the "function" had been a choir-practice, and there seemed to have been a cosy supper somewhere or other afterwards, graced by the presence of some of the ladies of the chorus; so that the young men got no credit for any pious motives on the strength of their attendance at this particular religious exercise. But they further manifested a suspicious familiarity with the doings of people who could hardly be supposed to be in Glasgow at all. One could understand their having the latest news of messieurs the fathers and brothers, whom they might reasonably be supposed to have met in town,—but the miracle was that they had most definite information

about the young ladies. How did they come to be impressed with the excellence of Miss Janet Grierson's rowing, or of Miss Phyllis Raeburn's knowledge of ferns? Young ladies do not navigate the Broomielaw, and the ferns in the crescents are confined to the commoner varieties. Then they could talk of the Misses Hamilton's lawn-tennis costumes, or the bezique experiences of the Misses Seaton. Now, it was well known that the Griersons were at Kirn, the Raeburns at Roseneath, the Hamiltons at Helenburgh, and the Seatons at Blairmore,—none of which places are exactly suburbs of Glasgow, although, at the same time, none of them are altogether out of reach if business hours be not unduly prolonged. It may be supposed, then, that our young friends occasionally refreshed themselves, after the labours of the day, by visiting such of their aquaintances as happened to be conveniently situated for that purpose. They would meet Tom Grierson or Archie Hamilton, on 'Change or at lunch, and, making a railway station appointment for 4.30 or 5 o'clock, half-past six would find them with their legs under the hospitable mahogany at Helenburgh or Kirn, as the case might be. Doubtless these

repasts were followed by water excursions, or woodland walks and cosy suppers, and these in turn by cards or music, or perhaps billiards; in all of which diversions we may suppose the ladies took part. Occasionally they would diversify the preceedings by inveigling their friends, such as the aforesaid Grierson or Hamilton—young men with proclivities for late hours and "swapping yarns," but otherwise estimable—into sharing with them the abandoned bachelorhood to which at that time Mr. Keith's decorous house was given up. At such times they would all dine in town, and afterwards go to the theatre:—not decorously to the stalls in evening dress, but in tweeds and wideawakes to the pit. And later, Hugh Crawfurd, coming home from a missionary meeting, with his hymn-book under his arm and his father or a class-leader in tow, would see these graceless heathens sauntering quietly up town, enjoying their cigars and each others' yarns. Be sure Hugh afterwards told his mother, and be sure that good lady put her own interpretation on the incident.

The heathens, however, with a careless nod to Hugh, would go on their way, and, arriving

at Mr. Keith's house, would have supper in the dining-room, after which they would adjourn to the snuggery to finish the evening. The evening occasionally took a good deal of finishing, and Keith's room would be still lighted when the small hours began to grow big. Or they would take a fancy for a long ramble in the quiet summer-night, out into the country for a few miles, coming home with the daylight. An itinerant member of the Little Zion congregation, who, we will suppose, had occasion to be out at night, mentioned these excursions and morning illuminations to Mrs. Crawfurd, in the meddling spirit begotten of a spurious consciousness of superior virtue; and Mrs. Crawfurd was greatly scandalised thereby. But her husband, when she told him of these things, saw nothing to condemn in them:

"They always did keep late hours at Keith's," he said, "and all the lot are real fine young fellows. They will do no harm with their liberty," and he half sighed to think he could hardly have the same confidence in his own son. But then James Crawfurd, with all his theological abstractions, was a tolerant man. He had the catholic Christian charity which belongs to all men who

are big enough to absorb and assimilate their religious belief, and to make it vital in their own lives. Thinking no evil himself, he was slow to see it in others. His better-half, on the other hand, was of the world, worldly. Her religion was simply an extension of selfishness from this world to the next—"other-worldliness," to use Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes's word. She would have been a better woman without it—or with more of it. She had, like the majority of its worshippers, more or less assimilated the doctrinal system of little Zion, but of its inner central essence—of love and sacrifice, and broad deep humanity, she knew nothing whatever. Her husband measured his virtue by the goodness of God, and was humble; she measured her virtue against her neighbours' shortcomings, after the fashion of people who

> "Compound for sins they are inclined to,
> By damning those they have no mind to."

And naturally she found herself quite an edifying personage. Thus she had no more fancy for smoking cigars, and sitting talking or reading till three o'clock in the morning, than the Banbury Puritan had for killing mice on Sunday; and, just as the Puritan hanged his cat for indulging in this grievous sin, so Mrs. Crawfurd

took every opportunity of expressing her opinion of Keith's conduct, and in so doing she naturally gave her audience the benefit of her own private redaction of the evidence.

But the pleasant life came to an end more suddenly than they expected. They were sitting together in the snuggery one Friday night at the end of August, discussing plans for the Rosebank life which they expected to resume on the morrow, as the older folks' conjoint holiday had come to an end, and the partners in the firm of Keith, Challoner and Co. proposed to return to the control of its affairs with the next week. Keith had the desk of his writing-table open and was sorting the papers inside:

"Who is that, I wonder?" said Tom, as the door-bell rang.

"Oh, Hamilton, or Grierson, or some of them," said Keith.

But presently Hugh Crawfurd was shown in. He was very soon accommodated with an easy-chair and a cigar, to say nothing of a matter of something to drink. As he lit his cigar he was sitting so that he could see into Keith's desk, and the first thing that attracted his attention was a roll of papers which he fancied he had

seen before; but it was not till afterwards that he recollected where.

"I have just come from the office," he said, by way of introducing his business. "I suppose you have not seen the latest telegrams from New York?"

"No," said Tom. "Paris or Hamburg or Magdeburg would be more in our line. But what's up in New York?"

"A panic seems setting in, and Steinbaur and Co. are mentioned as likely to be affected by it. Father thought you should let Mr. Carmichael know about it, by the morning steamer. I suppose he is interested in the firm."

"I'll let him know," said Tom, "but I don't think he has very much interest in the firm now."

"Well, the situation will probably be more fully developed to-morrow. I suppose you are going to Loch Dhuil for Sunday?"

"Yes. Are you?"

"I don't think so. I expect I shall have to be at the office till eight o'clock or so. I shall stay in town."

"That will please Mrs. Violet," said Tom. "By-the-by, how is she?"

"Very well," said Hugh.

"She has got back from Yorkshire, then?"

"No. But I expect her to-morrow night."

"You ought to settle down now into a respectable married man."

"That is easier said than done. There are a good many things to be considered with regard to that," said Hugh. Then Keith interposed with a question which turned the conversation into other channels, and very soon Hugh went away.

A short time afterwards Mr. Carmichael made his appearance. He did not look in the least like a ruined man. He seemed strong and undisturbed as ever, and his face had the resolute purposeful expression of a man who means to "worry through" his difficulty, whatever it may be.

"Well, my Christian friends," he said, as he inducted himself into the chair Hugh had vacated and lighted the inevitable cigar, "you hardly expected to see me to-night, I fancy?"

"Not exactly," said Tom. "I suppose you have got the news from New York? Hugh Crawfurd has just been here with it."

"Yes. I got a telegram this morning, and

another to-night; and the upshot of it all is that I find I must cross the Herring Pond again. I shall start to-morrow."

"Is the crisis serious, then, do you think?"

"Well that is as it happens. The crisis is not fully developed yet, and won't be, I expect, till the next week or two gets over. . . . . I don't think we shall come to grief; though, of course, it is on the cards that we may. Our principle has always been to have nothing to do with merely speculative business, or even with sound business as a speculation. Of course I do not know the details of my partners' procedure since I left, but I know enough to be pretty sure they have kept to the traditions of the firm; and in that case I shall endeavour to pull them through—however bad things may be—if it costs me every dollar I have."

"Is it likely to come to that?" asked Keith.

"It is possible it may," said Mr. Carmichael.

"And in that case you would have to begin the world again without capital?"

"That is about the size of it, my boy."

"If it should come to that, Uncle Harry," said Keith, "will you remember that I have a little capital that I want to invest—not very

much—say three thousand pounds—but perhaps it would be useful for you to start with? And you are heartily welcome to it."

"But suppose I lost it, Keith?"

"Well, it would be lost then. That's all. I might lose it, in any case."

"You are a good fellow, Keith; but there will be no need to risk your little fortune. Your uncle has promised me money if I should need it. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I have some shares in a land company out west, that I am very anxious to keep. I put ten thousand pounds—you will understand pounds better than dollars—into the concern some years ago, and at to-day's quotations my shares would hardly realise a fifth of that. And yet I have no investment I am more anxious to stick to. In less than five years those shares will be worth double what I gave for them, and that will be only the beginning of their increase. I meant them for Pauline; but, if a smash should come, I could not honourably hold them back. Now, if you like, I will let you have them at to-day's quotations, and I will buy them back for Pauline when the row is over, or you shall keep them—whichever you like. What do you say?"

"I say 'done,'" said Keith, "if I may hold them for Pauline."

"Why not hold them for yourself? Have you any objection to making your fortune?"

"Oh, dear me, no! But I am not going to do it at Pauline's expense."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Carmichael, smiling. "What do you think, Tom?"

"I think Keith is quite right," said Tom.

"Well, well! I don't know but that I agree with you. We can arrange the details to-morrow, Keith. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have secured Polly a competence."

"What are you going to do with Pauline?" asked Keith. "Is she going with Elsie?"

"No. I have arranged that, after you folks go away, she is to stay with Mrs. Crawfurd till I come back or send for her. If all goes well, I shall not be long away. I quite expect to be back by the middle of October at anyrate."

"And then?"

"Why, then Polly and I will set out on our travels together. Perhaps we shall come and see you at Vienna before we join your uncle. How would you like that?"

"I think I should like that very well."

"You ought to come and see me as well," said Tom.

"We shall see you here, shall we not?" said Mr. Carmichael.

"I don't think you will. I quite expect to have to go to Magdeburg soon. I am not satisfied with affairs there. The elders don't see the advisability of my going yet, but I am pretty sure they will see it before long."

"Well, we will come and see you too.—But look here, Keith: what are you going to do about those papers you have there—those Hugh Crawfurd papers, I mean? You see, we shall all be away, and, if Hugh were to take to his old tricks again, there ought to be somebody to stop him."

"That is just the difficulty," said Keith. "We shall all be away. If Pauline had only known Hugh's secret, we might have given her the certificates at anyrate, as she would know at once from Violet if Hugh made any fuss about the marriage. But then, living in the same house with Mrs. Crawfurd, the secret would be a sad burden to her. Tom and I have been talking about it: we think the best

plan would be to give Raeburn the papers and get him to act for us."

"Yes, I think that is about the only course open to you. But, as you say, while she is here, Pauline will have the best opportunity of knowing if anything goes wrong. Why not give her copies of the certificates under cover, with instructions to open the packet in case she discovers that Violet has any uneasiness about her marriage? You can endorse the copies with a memorandum of the whereabouts of the originals. And Pauline might have a further instruction to open the packet in the event"—and Mr. Carmichael paused and then looked very steadily at Keith as he went on—"of her receiving an offer of marriage."

"I hardly see how I can give her that last instruction," said Keith. "But do you think Hugh might play his old games again?"

"I think myself that it is only a matter of his getting the chance."

"But Pauline would have nothing to say to a marriage without your consent, and so you would have the matter in your own hands."

"How do I know that he mightn't forge my consent if it suited his purpose? A fellow who

will do what he has done, will do anything of that sort. However, if you two will make the copies, I will write the instructions."

This arrangement was finally adopted, and, while Keith and Tom made the copies, Mr. Carmichael wrote the instructions. Then they went downstairs to supper, and afterwards came upstairs again to "finish the evening." Uncle Harry was in great force, and full of "yarns"—stories of his youth, when the young men's fathers were young:—stories of life in the Far-west:—stories of the great war through which he had served in all the grades from private to colonel. But his listeners found his comments on the stories, illustrating his queer philosophy of life, quite as interesting as the stories themselves.

"It appears to me," he said by way of conclusion and summing-up, "it appears to me it's a mighty queer world. But there's more in life than we can make out at first sight. And the chances are, you know, that the Lord knows his own business best, and makes the world for his own ends and not ours. I can't help thinking that what a man has to do is to live a man's life first of all. If it is a good one, so much the

better—but a man's life—not an old woman's. Yes, a man's life, first of all:—you may hang on to that. I've a notion it's the Lord's business to look after the rest, and I quite think he's competent for the task."

And with that the genial old pagan took himself off to bed.

Presently Keith followed him to his room:—

"Mr. Carmichael," he said, "may I speak to Pauline when you are gone?"

"You may," was the answer. "I think I should like you to do so. It will give you the right to comfort her, and she will need comfort sorely. But think of the risk you run. Pauline may be poor after all; and then what will become of the research?"

"Pauline is worth more than research, Uncle Harry."

Next day the young men accompanied Uncle Harry to Greenock to see him off, and there met Mr. Keith and the girls, who had come from Rosebank on the same errand. As they waited on the pier for the arrival of the tender, Mr. Carmichael had a long talk with his daughter, and told her, among other things, of Keith's offer of the night before, and of his refusal to benefit

himself at her expense. If he had any doubt as to the nature of Pauline's feelings for Keith, the proud glad light that came into her eyes, as she listened, would have banished that doubt. So he went on to tell her how Keith wanted her for his wife, and how much he thought of Keith; so that Pauline was hardly surprised that, when they reached the steamer, her father took her and Keith into his state-room, and, putting her hand in the young man's, said:

"Keith, I put my dear girl in your charge: comfort her and care for her, for she will be sorely lost without her father—we have been comrades so many years——"

But, without waiting for her father to finish what he was saying, Pauline threw her arms about his neck and kissed him; and, while she was kissing him, Keith slipped outside, and left the father and daughter to themselves.

"Oh, Papa," said Pauline, "I do wish you were taking me with you. But promise me, if you cannot come back at once, you will send for me. Promise me, dear. If you are in trouble I have a right to be with you."

"I promise you, dear love. . . . . And now good-bye, my beautiful, my dear sweet girl. . .

God bless you, and keep you, dear love, dear love! . . ."

There was a long silent embrace, and then they came out and rejoined the others. But, when the last farewells were said, it was to Keith that Uncle Harry handed his daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

ALONE.

"Il ne se recognoist plus d'action vertueuse: celles qui en portent le visage, elles n'en ont pas pourtant l'essence: car le profit, la gloire, la crainte, l'accoutumance, et autres telles causes estrangères nous acheminent à les produire."

Montaigne.

THE September days went swiftly by, and the end of the month found the travellers ready to take wing. Tom's prognostications as to the exigencies of the Magdeburg account had been realised, and he had to go off there somewhat suddenly about the middle of the month. For the same reason Mr. Keith was unable to delay his departure till Mr. Carmichael's return, inasmuch as Tom had found the defalcations so serious as to require the presence of one of the heads of the firm. Mr. Carmichael's advices were so far satisfactory that he hoped to be able to leave New York very shortly, but, as financial movements were still considerably perturbed, it was deemed advisable that Pauline should await his return in Glasgow.

The last night had come, on which the travellers were to take their departure by the evening mail. Pauline and Keith had left the dining-room before the others, to have a last talk together in the snuggery. Pauline knelt by Keith's chair, as he sat looking into the fire. His arm was thrown around her, but almost the only sign that he was conscious of her presence was that every now and then he tenderly stroked her soft bright hair. On the easel behind the table stood the sketch Pauline had painted on the day she nursed Keith; the other picture she had painted for him adorned the wall opposite the fire. Her other canvasses, with the rest of her belongings, had already gone to Mrs. Crawfurd's, whither she was to follow them after seeing her friends off at the Dundas Street Station.

"Dearest," said Pauline, "do you know, I have such a strange presentiment of evil! It is very foolish of me, I know—but I cannot help it, it is there."

"What sort of evil, dear?" asked Keith.

Pauline shook her head:—

"Ah, that I don't know, dear; it is partly the indefiniteness that makes it so bad."

"Put it away, then, my darling. You cannot

face an evil till you know what it is. And, you may take it, a trouble does not concern you till it presents itself definitely: then face it, whatever it is. It is a bad plan to imagine evil or to meet it halfway. Wait till it comes, and then make the best of it."

There was silence for a little time, and then Keith went on again:—

"There is only one absolutely unbearable evil I can think of, and I don't fancy there is much danger of that."

"What is it, dear?" Pauline asked.

"To know you as anything short of the good woman you are, my darling." And one could hardly be surprised if at this juncture Keith applied a certain old-fashioned remedy for low spirits suited to the circumstances of his patient.

"My love," said Pauline, after a pause, "will you promise me something?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"We do not know what may happen: I want you to promise that you will always believe in me, whatever happens."

"I promise, dear love: I don't see much difficulty in that. And will you do the same for me?"

"Yes. I will promise the same, my dearest."

"You are much more likely to be exercised in that way than I am," Keith went on. "Mrs. Crawfurd has not the most exalted opinion of me, and she is not likely to keep her opinion to herself. She is the most accomplished slanderer I know. Her talent in that line amounts to genius. She can make the simple truth serve every purpose of the most advanced scandal-mongering. But, thank goodness, you are not to be there very long."

"I should not like to be there long. Oh, dearest, I shall be so lonely, without you and my papa! You must write to me often: I shall look forward to your letters so much, my Keith."

"You will have nothing to complain of on that score, I think. And then, you know, you are to come to Vienna; and I think I must try and come to see you all at Christmas, if you are at all within reach. And perhaps we could get Tom to come too, and we should all be together again."

"Ah, but you forget: perhaps I shall have to go back to New York. If I do, dear, you

will come over as soon as you can, after you are done at Vienna?"

"I will come, fast enough, and——" And Keith drew the pretty head towards him, and whispered the rest into a pretty ear. Then Pauline looked up with a blush and a bright smile, and nodded by way of answer, whereupon this further bargain was ratified by mutual consent.

"And then, dearest?" said Keith.

"And then—then what God sends for the rest of our lives. Oh, my love! my love! you will believe me, whatever happens?"

"I will believe in you till death, my Pauline."

"And I will believe in you, my Keith. I will believe nothing against you, for anything less than your own words."

"Not for my own writing, for instance?" said Keith, smiling.

"No, not for your own writing. There!—can I say more than that?"

"Hardly. That is belief with a vengeance. But, I warn you, if you stay long at Mrs. Crawfurd's you may need it all."

"Mrs. Crawfurd may say what she likes. I will believe nothing against you till I see you, and you tell it me yourself."

"Then nothing can come between us, dear; for I have nothing in my life to conceal from you. Now, are you comforted?"

"Yes, dear; I am comforted."

But the inexorable time went steadily on minute by minute, bringing nearer and nearer the hour of departure and farewell. Half-past seven found them at the station. The tickets and luggage duly seen after, and the travellers' places secured, they walked up and down the broad platform, sometimes all together and sometimes breaking into groups. They had nearly half an hour to spare, and you can take a luxurious farewell in half an hour. Mr. Keith took advantage of this time to impress upon Pauline his previous instructions—that, in any difficulty, she was to apply to Mr. Challoner, as the representative of Mr. Keith and her father.

"Now, my girl, mind!—you must not hesitate if you want money at any time."

"No, Uncle, I won't; but I have my own account at the bank."

"Yes. But we don't know what may happen."

"Then she found herself walking with Elsie, and then with Keith again. This time the two

explored the platform right up to the tunnel, and Pauline was greatly surprised to find such a quiet corner in the busy station. But she could scarcely be expected to know the resources of the place. Above the black void of the tunnel's mouth, a great wall towered aloft till it lost itself in the night. On either hand were lines of rails which might have carried trains in some inferno, so strong was the impression of being at the bottom of a deep shaft. They had taken their real farewells in Keith's room; but here, by the shunted carriages, in the dim light of the platform, overshadowed by the tall houses beyond the rails, they took their farewells again. Then the travellers got into their places, the guard whistled, the engine shrieked, and the train moved slowly off till it was swallowed up in the cavernous darkness of the tunnel; and Pauline was alone.

She did not go away immediately. She wandered up the platform again, and paced up and down in the dim light, thinking of many things —of the first meeting with Keith, and all that had followed it—all her life of the past six months. And, amid the thoughts of the past, came shy nestling hopes of the future—to have

her father again, to live her old girl-life with him—and he would soon be here now; a fortnight or so would decide that. And then, would it be Vienna or New York? Then came the thought of Keith's whisper, and the rosy light flamed in her face again. She walked away, comforted by her meditations, and, calling a cab, had herself driven to Blythswood Square—and utterly failed to understand Mrs. Crawfurd's horror at the fact that she had come by herself in a hansom.

Blythswood Square, like the Crescents, is a sleepy region of solid—very solid—respectability: a West Indian Trader's version of the Earthly Paradise. One can hardly imagine a city magnate of the olden time wandering in meadows of asphodel, his orthodox rotundity of figure concealed in the flowing white drapery appropriate to such occasions. He would have found it hard to distinguish such a garment, however ample, from a shirt. And as for his portly better-half——well, the subject becomes painful. No, your Conscript Father has his own idea of Elysium; and, for the asphodel of his enchanted region, he selects, say, the useful tobacco-plant to symbolise at once his aspirations and his

attainments. He likes to have a roof over his head and to live in comfort and entertain his friends thereunder. He has his likings in literature or art: will have his collection—curios, paintings, engravings, rare books, or what not. Or it may be his hobby is music, and he plays on bass-viol or violin. He is seldom an upstart. If he is a magnate by descent, he is of course in his natural place in the social economy. If he is a magnate by ascent, the chances are that he owes his elevation to the education so liberally dispensed by the dear old country to her humblest children. Then, in the social life of Glasgow, there is, comparatively speaking, a great freedom from the caste and shibboleths of English society. This may be traced to two causes: on the one hand, to the Scotch belief in descent for its own sake, dissociated from any necessary connection with land or title; and, on the other hand, to the national belief in the gospel of true democracy:—

"A man's a man for a' that."

Such a state of things is wanting in the atmosphere of caste-prejudices in which upstart vulgarity lives and moves and has its being. Of course this society, like all others, has its excep-

tions; but it is only fair that these should be considered as exceptions. There is no more false and absurd idea than that which seems to prevail in contemporary fiction with regard to the mercantile classes. That a man has made his own fortune, or has received it from a father who has done so, is, *ipso facto*, taken as proof that the man is a cad. It is by no means supposed to follow, that the founder of a noble family was a cad because he succeeded in life; or that—even when his success was the result of somewhat dubious means, or even of means that were not dubious at all—any taint is supposed to rest up his descendants. This is the cant in which the hypocrisy of society finds expression. We are apt to suppose that the conventicle has the monopoly of hypocrisy, forgetting that the same phase of human nature may occur in any society in which realities can be marked by externals. Indeed, to a philosophical spectator, it is somewhat amusing to observe the aberrations of the despised conventicle appearing as the normal phenomena of society at large, or to hear some social pharisee giving thanks that he is not as other men are . . . . . nor even as this maw-worm. The fact is, descent, wealth, learn

ing, religion, success, are accidents of character. A man may have any of them, and not be worth his salt in the world: he may have none of them, and be a thoroughly good fellow. "Generosus nascitur non fit," is true, and true in more senses than one; you can't make a gentleman. But "*Vir* nascitur non fit" is equally true. And when a man fulfils the obligations of his position in life, he has a right to look the world in the face. This was a great characteristic of the Glasgow merchant of old-time: he stood on his own legs and went his own way. Naturally his house reflected his ideas. It was substantial—very: its main architectural feature might be described as purposeful simplicity. He believed in purpose, and hence eschewed the ornament of his time, and thereby eschewed evil. Moreover, within, the dwelling was spacious and comfortable, not to say cosy; the furniture handsome, if somewhat heavy; and everything of the best, after a decorous fashion. Decorum was perhaps its strong point. Life in those old houses was one long idyll of decorum. New ideas ran in the channels of old habits of thought, and the result was a social life as piquant and *sui generis* as

that of any old-world Faubourg St. Germain—quite as dignified too, in its way, and much less artificial. In any community it is the unwritten, unspoken eleventh commandment which is the most binding, a breach of which is equivalent to the simultaneous contravention of the permanent, subsidiary decalogue. The eleventh commandment of Blythswood Square was a sort of Janus-utterance, but both its aspects were in correlation. "Thou shalt make no display," presupposed the lesser rubric: "Let all things be done decently and in order." The highest aspiration of life was decorum:—*Decorum in excelsis*, as far removed from the passionate *Gloria* of choiring angel or ecstatic saint, as from the sullen *non est deus* of the fool. The good folks' religion too, if somewhat formal, permeated all their outer life at least, and took much the same shape whether they happened to be followers of St. John Calvin or of St. Joseph Hume. Both were rigid intellectual systems, and both subjected the emotions to a sufficiently wholesome restraint without otherwise greatly interfering with them.

But the original settlers of the Blythswood Estate had all passed away, and their successors

of a later generation had taken their place. Nevertheless, the tradition of the elders still held good, and Pauline found herself in the midst of a society that was more nearly akin to that of the last century than any she could have readily found elsewhere in these islands. In some respects, however, James Crawfurd's was not a typical household. It would probably have been difficult to have found another house in the Square without its collection or its library. But James Crawfurd, though he had a small library of theological treatises, cared little for the literature of theology, and still less for any other literature, or for art or politics. Little Zion was his hobby. Naturally his household took little interest in life outside the conventicle, and the talk round his table ran very much to theological discussion—the only form of carnal enjoyment, perhaps, which brings no satiety—to the disputers. Pauline never was able to see the point of these discussions, but she noticed that Hugh appeared to get on very well at them, and even began to think that perhaps she had underrated his intellectual ability. But in other houses which she visited Pauline saw more of the old-world life—old-fashioned ways of ancient

ladies, and the hardly less old-fashioned ways of their daughters and nieces—and therewith a healthier and more hopeful interest in the thought and work of the everyday world of the nineteenth century than prevailed in the Crawfurd establishment.

Pauline expected to find life with Mrs. Crawfurd a somewhat different affair from her life with the Keiths, but she was by no means prepared for the difference of moral atmosphere which actually developed itself. It was a difference in oxygenation as it were, and gave her the feeling of having left the free fresh air for the languid confinement of a hot-house. With her father and the Keiths, Pauline had been accustomed to a good deal of caustic comment upon human nature and its ways, but the impression left by such comments was on the whole that people might be trusted to do their best, whatever amusement might be forthcoming from any differences between their real and their self-supposed motives. Right, in fact, was practically taken for granted; while wrong represented an abnormal state of things requiring investigation and explanation. At Crawfurds', on the other hand, all this was reversed. Judgments were

direct and authoritative, and their authority was based on the assumption that human nature, even in a state of grace, was intrinsically bad. Evil was taken for granted, but goodness had to justify itself. Even manifest right-doing, in the case of unilluminated outsiders, was carefully explained away as a temporary and aberrant phase of the deceitfulness of man's heart. The unsaved had no right to do right. In addition, the standard of right and wrong was in itself artificial. Altogether, it was little wonder that Pauline found the goodness—or goodiness—of the Crawfurd household somewhat oppressive—at first, at least. It was very different from her mother's simple faith in "*le bon Dieu*," or her father's large-hearted trust in the issues of life.

But still the girl was happy enough. The Crawfurds were kind in their way, and kindness makes wonderful amends even for want of sympathy. She had her father and her lover to think of—to say nothing of Elsie and the others. That Mrs. Crawfurd, who knew nothing of Pauline's engagement, made no secret of her opinions of Keith, only concentrated mademoiselle's thoughts upon him. She never attempted

to defend him even to herself—that would have been like insulting him; while to speak of him to Mrs. Crawfurd would have been profanation. That lady, however, meant no unkindness, though it was not without a purpose that she disparaged Keith. She became fond of Pauline, which was an additional reason, especially since the New York advices were so satisfactory, for endeavouring to secure her as a daughter-in-law. Indeed, to do Mrs. Crawfurd justice, her affection became so real that it would even have survived the loss of Mr. Carmichael's fortune. So that the two got on very well together.

Hugh, of course, constituted himself Pauline's cavalier-in-ordinary, and in his own way helped to make her stay in the house agreeable to her. He had given up the idea of marrying her, and would probably have told her the truth about his wife but for the position of "mutual friend" he had taken up when Pauline spoke to him about Violet at Rosebank, and which he had resumed when the subject had again been broached. The truth involved exposure. But Pauline's special friend in the house was Hugh's father, who squired her about to such an extent that he earned himself quite a character for

dissipation. After exhausting all the religious diversions at command, he actually escorted her to lectures, and concerts, and even gave himself up to the frivolity of long walks in the park. But the climax was reached when he went with her to a picture gallery! Little Zion began to contemplate the possibility of his falling from grace.

So life went on from day to day in the quiet house in the quiet square. Nothing broke its monotony but the travellers' letters, which came to hand—Keith's especially—with commendable regularity. Mr. Carmichael had not been able to return so soon as he expected, but towards the end of October Pauline received a telegram announcing the completion of his business, and his intention to leave New York at once. Next day Mr. Crawfurd got another telegram from New York, which disturbed him greatly. He walked slowly home, though it was still early afternoon, and, sending for Pauline to his study, broke the news to her very tenderly and pitifully.

Her father was dead!

CHAPTER VII.

BEREAVED.

"O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring.
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead!"

Walt Whitman.

WHEN more detailed news came to hand, the tragedy of the situation seemed almost to deepen. The financial crisis in New York had been severe and prolonged. Mr. Carmichael had devoted all his resources to the rescue of the firm, and had thrown himself into the work with the passionate activity natural to him, regardless—in the face of what seemed to him his duty—of the danger always lying in wait for him. The terrible strain had told heavily upon him, but he had remained at his post to the last—the interests of others were in his keeping, and he felt his own honour at stake. Besides, he was not the man to do things by halves, and the big game had its own attrac-

tion for him—the same fierce delight of battle he had felt in many a stiff fight in the wartime. He had won his campaign, but at what a cost! The reaction killed him. After he had sent off Pauline's telegram, he had spent the evening at Mr. Steinbaur's house. He had gone early to his room, and in the morning they found him there, dead. He was sitting by the window with a bundle of letters in his hand—Pauline's letters they were. Beside him, on a table, was an open book, and on the book lay a half-smoked cigar, its long white ash projecting beyond the book, and still intact, just as he had carefully laid it down to read his dear girl's letters. His face was tranquil as if in quiet sleep, but it was the long deep sleep of death.

It was scarcely surprising that Pauline's highly-strung, sensitive organisation should be thrown out of gear by such a shock. She lay for long days in a semi-unconscious state, hardly to be distinguished from a swoon; and only awoke to an apathetic life in which consciousness was suspended when not actually in operation under the pressure of some direct stimulus. She ate and drank mechanically and roused herself into response, when addressed, with a sad patience

and weariness of effort that was very touching. Mrs. Crawfurd tried to interest her in walks and drives and occupations; but Pauline liked best to go with Mr. Crawfurd to his various meetings, where she sat through the services like a beautiful ghost—lost to all sense of her surroundings indeed, but soothed by the reverie—the "induced" current of thought, as it were, generated by the praise and prayer she did not directly hear. Letters came—one from Keith, not knowing of her loss, but, as it happened, full of her father as well as of herself. She read it tenderly, again and again. But she did not answer it—she could not tell Keith the sad news. Then came another from her uncle, which also comforted her somewhat. Elsie was too ill to write, or even to be told of the calamity. Then a second letter from Keith: very brief this one was; but it comforted Pauline with the sympathy of a sorrow like her own; and it enclosed all the letters Keith had received from her father, from which she learnt much more of his last month of life than she had done from his letters addressed to herself. Then she wrote to Keith and her uncle, and even so far came back to life as to think of making arrangements for the future,

but she apathetically submitted to Mr. Crawfurd's wish that she should stay where she was till her uncle's return, or at least till she was herself better able to travel. And so Pauline resumed the routine of her old life, which was mechanical enough to suit even her apathetic condition. Mr. Keith was glad to avail himself of Mr. Crawfurd's arrangement for Pauline, as Elsie was more dangerously ill than ever, and he could not leave her.

And Hugh? How was he affected? After that scene in the laboratory, he had tacitly accepted the situation, seeing that the further pursuit of Pauline was impossible in the face of her father's knowledge of his marriage. And then Violet had come to him just at the moment when he was softened by the generosity of his opponents; and, but for his habitual irresolution, he might have acknowledged her there and then. But old habit was too strong for him—he could not take decisive action without previous deliberation: this was the way in which his training had reacted upon him. The distrust of human nature, with the motive-analysis and word-juggling resulting from artificial and arbitrary standards of right and wrong, inevitably pro-

duced incapacity for spontaneous action. Hugh's instinct in an emergency was concealment—not from falseness, but simply to preserve the *status quo ante* till deliberated action could be resolved upon. Just as the life of civilisation has a tendency to blunt the keenness of physical perception so manifest in the untutored savage, so we sometimes find among *soi-disant* religious communities a certain bluntness of moral instinct due to the complexity of their emotional life. Hugh had been trained—carefully trained—to distrust moral instinct; so that it cannot be a matter for surprise that in this emergency, as in others, his action should be determined by quite other than moral considerations. He gave himself up to Violet for the time being, but deferred the question of acknowledgment. Then, as much to please Violet as himself, he also allowed her to go away to her Yorkshire home; and, though he had given up the idea of repudiating her, and had brought her back to Glasgow, he had still no definite intention of acknowledging her, and was as far from settling down as a married man as ever.

The situation was not exactly improved by Pauline's presence in his father's house. The

little attentions which Hugh's nominal position gave him a right to render her, and which he still would have had the right to offer if his marriage had been known, reacted injuriously in intensifying his feeling that he was single, and his dislike of being considered married. They unconsciously educated him into feeling that he occupied the position of a suitor for Pauline's hand. So strong did this feeling become, that he was actually jealous when other young men, his acquaintances, offered her the same attentions, according to their opportunities. Naturally he was a good deal with Pauline. Mrs. Crawfurd took care that he accompanied her walks and drives as much as possible, and his father would have insisted on his attendance at the chapel-meetings she went to, if he had shown any inclination to stay away.

Pauline made no objections to Hugh's companionship, inasmuch as, at this time, still supposing himself to be treading the paths of simple friendship, he by no means thrust it upon her. In fact, she thought nothing at all about it except as a means of helping Violet; and Hugh got deeper and deeper into a mesh of falsehood, in order to keep up his assumed

character of "our mutual friend," while at the same time he failed to establish himself in her regard in any other capacity. His nature never had any real contact with hers. She never had the feeling of comradeship with him that she had at once grown into with Tom and Keith, and it is quite possible that she would have derived considerably more enjoyment from the companionship of a favourite dog.

It was upon Hugh that the situation really took effect. He became more and more the slave of the girl's beauty, and thereby became less and less able to extricate himself from the growing entanglements of his position. The Little Zion people, seeing him so much with Pauline, drew the very natural conclusion that he was in love with her, and some of them even went so far as to hint as much to him in a friendly way. Hugh neither encouraged nor discouraged these hints, and his mother found them fitting in so well with her notions that she very decidedly encouraged them, giving such answers, when they came her way, that very soon a rumour grew up that Pauline was engaged to Hugh, and among their circle of acquaintance she became more or less regarded as his property.

He was by no means displeased by the soft impeachment, which really gratified his vanity; he had no great wish to deny the report, even if he could have done so without drawing more attention to his affairs than would have been altogether agreeable to him. So he let matters take their course, and in time came to feel as though he had a right to the position. At the same time he was keeping up appearances with Violet, and it is difficult to see wherein he was better than any dissipated young man who, proposing to marry one woman, carries on an intrigue with another. His secrecy was growing into falsehood, and the falsehood was poisoning his nature to the core. Dissolution and decay are but the reversed action of life-forces in the physical world, and moral forces have their reversed action also, wherein the savour of life becomes the savour of death. So with Hugh Crawfurd—the very influences which should have developed his better nature, were, because of his false position, the means of his debasement. His wife and Pauline were both of them good women, and yet their influence on him was bad. Why was this? Well, it must be largely set down to his training,

resulting as it did in a sort of moral paralysis which made him very much the creature of circumstances—incapable of will alike in the breaking or the keeping of the laws of life in which he had been brought up. His goodness and his badness were alike negative rather than positive. His hand-to-mouth villainy was the correlative of a low moral organisation. A worse man might at least have been a moral vertebrate : Hugh was not even articulate—he was a mollusc ; or, to use another illustration, he was like the "vegetable villains," about whom Mr. Grant Allen discourses so pleasantly, who reverse the normal conditions of vegetable life.

To come back to the situation. Hugh was not so far gone in evil but that, if he had acknowleged Violet or even if he had lived for her only, her influence might have availed to raise him from his low estate. But, just when he was thus poised as it were between good and evil, and just when the scale might be thought to be turning in his favour by means of the approaching advent of Mr. Carmichael to take Pauline away, thus leaving him with no resource but Violet—just then the event of Mr. Carmichael's death turned the balance against him.

Hugh could scarcely be blamed for sympathising with Pauline in her grievous sorrow; and yet, under the circumstances, this sympathy had the effect of at once increasing his devotion to her and his separation from Violet. His visits to his wife became more and more irksome, and, although he had no set intention of abandoning her, the idea very soon occurred to him that Mr. Carmichael's death had removed the only real obstacle to his pursuit of Pauline. Playing with the notion without any particular intention of reducing it to practice, he worked out the problem. None of the Keiths were likely to be back in Glasgow before May. He had thus a matter of six months to work in. Once let him be married to Pauline, and none of them dare speak —for her sake. Even Violet—to such a depth had Hugh descended that he could even suggest this to himself—even Violet, for Pauline's sake, would hold her tongue.

Although Hugh had no intention of trying to carry out this precious programme, he made no effort to keep his mind from continually dwelling on it. He played with it continually, working the plan into completeness and adapting it to various circumstances. This especially

came to be his occupation as he sat in chapel—the very model of an attentive listener. This was his "induced" current of thought. Pauline sat in the same pew, but at right angles to him, so that her beauty was before his eyes all the time, to give substance and reality to his vision He almost felt chivalrous as he imagined himself comforting and protecting this poor desolate one; but the legitimate chivalry of righting his wife's wrongs did not present itself with the same force. Violet had had her turn as the object of this theoretical devotion. "*Autres temps, autres mœurs*" has more meanings than one.

There was, however, one factor in his calculations that Hugh could never resolve to his satisfaction. That factor, curiously enough, was not Pauline:—he could not imagine her permanently blind to his transcendent merits:—it was Keith. He could never feel quite assured of Keith's carrying out the part assigned to him in the event of the programme being successfully carried out. Keith's strong clear sense, and his unflinching way of going through with whatever he took in hand, were great stumblingblocks in the way of even a theoretical solution of Hugh's problem. Again and again, he worked every-

thing out satisfactorily till he came to the point of Keith's reappearance on the scene, and then found he could get no further. He could not feel certain that Keith would allow even Pauline's happiness to interfere with Violet's rights; nay, he was certain that Pauline herself would not allow it. Whether Keith would marry Pauline, after taking her away from him, was a doubtful matter—though it would be quite in keeping with Keith's character to offer her such reparation. But would Pauline marry Keith under such circumstances?—Hardly; and meantime—— But we are not bound to follow all the creeping and crawling of Hugh's vermile thoughts. Suffice it to say that Keith was an irreducible symbol in his equation, and that, from a wholesome fear of consequences, he did not attempt to carry out his project. Nevertheless the evil leaven did its work till Hugh's moral fabric was honeycombed with its fermentation.

Violet was again leading her old lonely life—only with less hope and spirit as the days went by. But the loneliness of her life affected her less than the change in Hugh. Somehow she was disappointed in him, apart from the increase in the intervals of his visits. A doubt of his

genuineness had crept into her heart, and even her strong, brave spirit quailed at the prospect of such a future as that implied. She could not get rid of the idea that there was little to hinder Hugh from acknowledging her if he would only face the situation with a little courage. He always managed to turn the conversation when she tried to get him to talk about this, and he was foolish enough to fancy that he had disposed of the subject because she did not follow up her talk with useless complainings. But Violet had made up her mind. Her health was failing, and the cares of maternity were coming upon her: for the sake of the child that was to be born to her, she felt bound to obtain the assertion of her position as Hugh's wife. But even the sacred obligations of his fatherhood could not move Hugh to make the needful acknowledgment; and Violet's courage began to fail her as the days went by, and still he showed no disposition to move in the matter. She was gentle and tender as of old, for she still loved this graceless husband, who was not worthy to tie her shoe-strings; but it was a painful situation for her—with this great trouble coming upon her, and the greater trouble of her unacknow-

ledged wifehood overhanging that. Sometimes she thought it would be better for her to die when the child was born; and then, perhaps, Hugh, out of pity for the motherless little one, would make the needful reparation to the dead wife's memory. But even of that she could by no means feel assured; for Hugh's nature was beginning to tell upon her, and, although she never acknowledged it, even in her thoughts she was beginning to distrust him—to feel that somehow a blight had fallen upon the promise of his manhood, and that he was a weak creature after all.

Poor Violet! in the very spring of her youth and beauty to be longing for death the deliverer—the only deliverer she could hope for! It was very pitiful.

CHAPTER VIII.

DESOLATE.

"Be thy heart a well of love, my child,
Flowing and free and sure;
For a cistern of love, though undefiled,
Keeps not the spirit pure."

George Macdonald.

ONE calm frosty evening in early winter, Pauline, muffled in dark furs, came down the steps of Mr. Crawfurd's house, and set off to walk down the hill into town. The night had fallen, and the moon was high in the heavens—flooding the silent streets with silver whiteness and velvety blackness of shadow—flashing from roof and cornice and window in shafts of light, and resting in soft flickering brightness on grey breadths of wall. From light to shadow and from shadow to light, she walked on, wrapped in sad thoughts, and yet not insensible to the beauty of the night. In that clear air existence itself was a pleasure, and the solemn stars, twinkling above the earth lamps in far-off depths of night, gave her a sense of communion with the

unseen that was comforting beyond words. Even in life, her father could not have been nearer to her than she felt he was this night—not in any presence, material or ghostly, but in nearness and communion of spirit. Pauline walked down to the Dundas Street Station, and watched the departure of the evening mail. She had got into a habit of doing this frequently, indulging herself in thus stimulating her memories of the last glimpse she had had of those who were now left to her nearest and dearest in the world. As she walked about among the departing travellers and their friends, it seemed to her that everyone was talking about some overwhelming calamity. She heard the words: "What a fearful loss of life!" "Shocking carelessness!" "Terrible death!" "Ghastly tragedy!" and similar expressions of horror, echoed from group after group as she passed. When the train had shrieked itself into the tunnel, she lingered awhile at the end of the platform by the cavernous darkness, and looked up at the still patient stars shining athwart the fitful smoke-drifts that filled the shaft. "Were these calamities greater than hers?" she wondered. "Poor souls!" she said to her-

self, as she thought of the sufferers by this new disaster, whatever it was, and again with deeper pity as she thought of the living who must mourn for the untimely dead. She wondered what had happened; she would ask about it when she got back to the house. But she could not think her own thoughts in the presence of this unknown death and desolation; and so she went away.

It was Pauline's custom, after visiting the station, to go on to the chapel, to slip quietly in to whatever meeting was being held, and then to come home with Mr. Crawfurd. But on this particular evening Mr. Crawfurd was engaged for a second meeting on church business, and Pauline, remembering this, slipped out again before the service was quite over, to avoid being escorted home by Hugh, who of course was there as well. And, to make assurance doubly sure, instead of taking her normal route westward by St. George's Square, she turned down towards Argyll Street, where she got a "'bus" for the Crescents—just as she had done, she remembered, on the night when she met Keith for the first time. When the 'bus turned the corner of St. Vincent Street, she found herself looking out

half-expecting to see Keith talking to the little newspaper-girl. There was no Keith; but the girl was there, selling her papers. Pauline left the 'bus as soon as she could get it stopped. Then she went back to the little newsvendor and bought a paper. The girl was getting near the end of her stock—(nothing like a calamity for selling newspapers)—and, if Pauline had been experienced in such matters, the brisk sales going on around her would have given her some idea of the catastrophe. But she was thinking more of the girl than of the news, and her sympathies were aroused by the sight of the poor little waif cast out upon the night in her scanty garments, ill-fitted to withstand the winter cold. Pauline took off a fleecy wrapper she wore over her furs, and wound it about the child's neck and shoulders, and then went on her way, still thinking of her meeting with Keith. Arrived at home, she went upstairs to take off her furs, and was just about to come down again when she bethought herself of her paper. It would have an account of the calamity she had heard so much about. She turned up the gas again, and opened the sheet. The first words that caught her eyes were:—

"Dreadful catastrophe at Vienna—theatre burnt down—great loss of life." With a growing horror she read the dreadful record of the hundreds of lives lost in the fire and the panic. All the fearful scene came before her, even amid the brevity of the telegraphic despatch. She stood horror-stricken at the thought of such awful misery. Then, mechanically taking up the paper again, she came upon a column of later news on another page :—

"Fifth Edition—Latest Intelligence." And, glancing down the column, she read this paragraph :—

"It is with deep regret that we observe the name of Dr. Keith Dunbar, of Bankside Crescent, in the official list of victims. . . . . ."

She read no more—darkness closed over her like a whelming sea, and with a little sob she sank to the ground in a swoon.

Hugh Crawfurd slept little that night. He sat in his room, hour after hour, revolving his plan—not that he had set himself to do so—but it had taken possession of him. With Keith out of the way, his plan was possible. And, thinking of Keith, he suddenly remembered the papers he had seen in Keith's desk. The thought

came to him like an inspiration. If he could but get those certificates into his possession he would have the game in his own hands. Keith himself could hardly interfere with him without the certificates. So his plan enlarged itself to meet this new necessity, and, pondering, pondering, he sought the solution of this difficulty also. Night after night it was the same—weighing, balancing, calculating, working out each minutest detail, till the plan was again complete. He made no effort to deliver himself from this thraldom. He glozed over its wickedness with the thought that it was only a plan. That the plan was a wicked one, did not startle him; he had been brought up to believe that "the thoughts of the heart," even of the best people, were apt to be "desperately wicked." But yet, deep in his own heart, he knew it was no mere plan. The plan had become a purpose.

Hugh was in the habit of going to business before his father, but he generally waited to get his letters before he started. One morning the letters arrived just as he was brushing his hat in the hall before going out, and, selecting his own correspondence from the heap on the salver the maid was holding out to him, Hugh was horrified

by the sight of a letter addressed to Pauline in Keith's characteristic handwriting. He took this letter up with his own, persuading himself that he did not notice it. Then, selecting his favourite umbrella from the rack and looking in a hanging mirror to assure himself that his hat was adjusted to the proper angle, he left the house and sauntered leisurely down town. It is needless to say that Pauline never got that letter, nor the subsequent letters that Keith wrote—nor even, seeing they might have contained some reference to Keith's safety, any letters from her uncle.

Pauline relapsed into an apathetic occupation of her place in the mechanical routine of the household. Her life was much the same as before her father's death, except that she paid no visits and received no visitors. More than ever, she accompanied James Crawfurd to his meetings; she took long walks alone, and Hugh's companionship was reduced to zero. He only saw her in the house, and as she seldom talked, that amounted to very little. Even Violet had gone out of her thoughts, and, when Hugh tried to interest her in his wife's affairs, she only said wearily:—

"Not now; I cannot think clearly, but, when you have any definite news, let me know about it."

Mrs. Crawfurd tried in vain to combat this languor. She saw that the shock of Keith's death had confirmed the apathy into which Pauline had fallen on the death of her father, and she had grave fears for the girl's life. Pauline, however, by a great effort, managed to go about much the same as before, though all interest in life had left her. The household knew nothing of her long nights of weeping—they only saw the dull, spiritless languor of the day, and the gentle, patient weariness of her efforts to rouse herself to meet their kindness with attention. For they were kind—Mrs. Crawfurd especially. Her worldliness fell away from her in the presence of this deep affliction, and her womanhood asserted itself into new life, as she took this poor, desolate soul into her heart of hearts, and for the time being lived in her and for her. Mrs. Crawfurd had always been a selfish woman, but her selfishness had nevertheless been in the main a desire for the welfare and success of others—belonging to her—or of some cause she had espoused. She

had never been able to identify herself with others, but she had identified others with herself. Her selfishness was an incrustation, as it were—the deposit of a somewhat sluggish, moral circulation; sluggish because its motive-power was the artificial incitement of regulated and rewardful duty, not the life-giving force of love. She had never had to go outside the somewhat narrow circle of her duties, and the selfishness had grown with the evaporation of fulfilled virtues—a very different thing from the corrosive acid to which Hugh's selfishness may be likened. But here was a love flowing from no obligation of duty, a spontaneous outburst of human nature; and this love was the solvent of the incrusting selfishness. She would have married Pauline to Keith Dunbar with the greatest of pleasure if, by so doing, she could have brought back something of gladness to the girl's life. She even revised her judgment of Keith, and comforted Pauline by talking kindly of him, till she quite forgot that she had ever had anything to say against him. But Keith was dead—why should not Pauline marry Hugh? and the more she loved the girl, the more her heart became set on seeing her made happy as Hugh's wife.

A husband's love might console her somewhat for the loss of her father. And Hugh might take her abroad for a time, for travel and change of scene. Or he might take his brother James's place in New York, and then Pauline would live among the scenes of her youth. So Mrs. Crawfurd unconsciously lent herself to the encouragement of Hugh's scheme, without having the slightest idea of what she was really doing thereby.

But love is expansive, and Mrs. Crawfurd's newly-awakened affection came, in course of time, to extend itself to Elsie and then to Violet. She got quite interested in Violet. Pauline had to tell all she knew about her, and her way of life; and they had long talks about the falseness of her position, and about what could be done to remedy it. But Pauline never mentioned Hugh's name in the matter, believing that his mediatorship was a secret she was bound to keep. She began to visit Violet again in consequence of the talks, though she visited no one else—not even Mrs. Challoner, which was a pity, all things considered. She carried kind messages and offers of help from the older lady, all of which were very balm

to Violet's wounded spirit. In the end Mrs. Crawfurd came to the determination to visit Violet herself, thinking that, with her position and authority, she might be able to be of some service to the poor neglected wife. Violet began to see a way out of her trouble.

James Crawfurd, too, would have been glad to further any project that promised happiness for Pauline. The idea of a marriage with Hugh had also occurred to him, but he did not share his wife's implicit faith in the young man, and was not altogether assured of his worthiness to have the keeping of such a treasure as this dear girl with the beautiful soul. Still, he would gladly have had her for his daughter-in-law. He was not altogether without some inkling of Pauline's love for Keith, and was less deceived than the others by the efforts she made to conceal the change his death had wrought in her life. Day after day, Mr. Crawfurd, hoping against hope, scanned the papers for some contradiction of the report of Keith's death. But there was no contradiction, and it so happened that it did not occur to any of the few persons who knew Keith was not dead, to undeceive him. He could not increase his kindness to Pauline, but

his sympathy was perhaps the greatest comfort she had.

This renewed interest in Violet roused Pauline from her lethargy—to a very slight extent, but still sufficiently to make her sweet nature seek for some outlet for its love and sympathy. First, for Keith's sake, she sought out the little news-vendor, finding her, after many enquiries, in a squalid home up a noisome court in a noisome vennel. The poor little waif was grievously ill, and needed all the help Pauline could give. Pauline nursed her back to life, and, in doing so, found others she could help, and others after that, and found, too, in the relief of the miseries of others some solace to her own great grief.

Slight as was the improvement in Pauline's interest in life, it was sufficient, after some little time, to enable Hugh to resume his old relations with her in his character of Violet's friend. He showed himself so zealous in the service, and so unobtrusively kind to herself, that Pauline even began to feel as if her distrust of him must somehow be an injustice. This reaction was eminently favourable to Hugh's chances; and when, after the old year had fairly passed away into the limbo of sad memories, he ventured

to speak of love, his rejection was sufficiently definite, but unaccompanied by any expression of scorn or dislike:

"I love Keith," she said, "I can never love another man." But her apathetic indifference to her own life and all its concerns was still so deep that, under the solicitations of the old people, in gratitude for their kindness, and utter hopelessness for herself, she at last consented to the marriage:

"Let it be as you will," was all she could say, and Hugh forebore to attempt to provoke any stronger feeling. He had acuteness enough to see that, if he would win her, the marriage must take place before this lethargy was disturbed.

But when it came to naming a date for the marriage, Hugh found himself unexpectedly in check from his adversary's queen and her knight. Pauline quietly demanded that, before she married him, Violet's affairs should be put right.

"I am not going to take you away from her while she needs your help," was the gist of her argument. "You know you will not be able to do anything for her when you are away."

His father insisted on his obtaining Mr. Keith's consent:—

"Archibald Keith is her guardian and her nearest relation. I am not going to allow her to marry you or anyone else without his consent," was Mr. Crawfurd's ultimatum. "He refused you Elsie, and he may have his reasons for refusing you Pauline. Perhaps you had better write to him yourself. I will leave it to you."

Hugh promptly fixed a date that left barely time to receive Mr. Keith's answer. He showed his father the draft of his letter to that gentleman, and in due time produced the required answer. Mr. Crawfurd read the letter carefully and then scrutinised the envelope and its postmarks, before he spoke:—

"Archibald must be sadly shaken by his troubles, to judge by his writing. However I have nothing more to say about the matter. I am glad, though, that Carmichael approved of your attentions to his daughter. Perhaps you had better go up at once and tell her about it."

So Hugh brought Pauline the letter:—

"My dear Hugh,

I need not say that I was somewhat surprised on receiving your letter asking for my consent to your marriage with my niece. I was not aware you had any inclination that way.

But I believe I am only carrying out the wishes of Pauline's father in giving my consent. As to her property, I have instructed Messrs. Grierson and Wright to prepare. . . . . .

"I wish you and your wife every happiness. I need hardly remind you that, in winning her, you have won an inestimable treasure, of which it behoves you to show yourself worthy.

"You do not mention the date of the happy event. Could you not have it soon, and bring Pauline over here to see her cousin, whose recovery, I am sorry to say, is still very slow? . . . . .

"Yours very sincerely,

"ARCHIBALD KEITH."

This production was certainly a credit to Hugh's invention, but he had forgotten one thing: there ought to have been a note for Pauline, and that he had omitted to provide. Pauline had nothing to say with regard to her uncle's letter, except to ask Hugh if she might keep it—a request which he would have liked to refuse. She showed no enthusiasm about her bridal, but simply reminded Hugh of his promise concerning Violet, and he undertook to report progress next day.

Pauline took the letter up to her own room to consider it. Why was there no line for her? she wondered. Had her uncle been offended by her silence? All the afternoon she sat there lost in loving thoughts of the old man. Then she wrote a long, long loving letter to him, asking him why he had never written to her since dear Keith had died—had he cast her off?—telling him how Violet's marriage was to be acknowledged as the condition of her marrying Hugh, with much more that considerably astonished the worthy gentleman when he came to read it. Then she went down to the station and got the letter sent off by the mail. As she watched the departure of the train her heart was full of a great longing: she would have given half her fortune to have been going away in it to join her dear ones, the only dear ones left to her in the wide-wide world. She wandered up the platform thinking of them. Ah, how she longed to be away! She did not want to be married; but she had promised, and, if Hugh fulfilled his part of the bargain, she would feel obliged to fulfil hers. But, oh! how she loathed this marriage!

Pauline's lethargy was leaving her, and she was to be married to Hugh Crawfurd in less than a week.

CHAPTER IX.

AWAKENING.

"What behaved well in the past, or behaves well to-day is not such a wonder:
"The wonder is always and always, how there can be a mean man or an infidel."

Walt Whitman.

IT had been, from the first, part of Hugh's plan to discredit Keith to Pauline, and he accepted her stipulation with regard to the acknowledgment of Violet's marriage as affording the most suitable means of carrying out that purpose. But he did not care to face Pauline on the subject. Carefully as he had endeavoured to prepare himself for the interview, he was afraid that some sudden look or question might disconcert him, and he hated emergencies. He therefore decided to make his disclosure in writing, trusting that the damning completeness of his case would ensure such intensity of conviction that, by the time he saw her again, she would be too apathetic to ask inconvenient questions. So, on the Saturday afternoon, Pauline

received a sealed packet, accompanied by a note:—

"You will find here," Hugh wrote, "full information with regard to Violet's marriage. I should like you to be alone when you open the packet, as the communication affects you more nearly than you perhaps imagine. You will understand, when you have read these papers, how far I am able to satisfy your wishes; and, also, why I have refrained from telling you of this before. It is your own adherence to your stipulation that compels me to make the disclosure now. I had hoped that perhaps you need never know it. In justice to me, remember that I have made the disclosure unwillingly. . . ."

Pauline took the packet upstairs to a small drawing-room, where she was not likely to be disturbed, and, after locking the door, settled herself in an easy-chair by the window. It was a pleasant afternoon in March, so warm and mild that the window had been left open for the sake of the soft south wind, which fanned the poor girl's worn face like a breath of spring. Below, the Square seemed peacefully asleep in the stillness and warm sunshine of the winter afternoon, with soft wandering shadows for its

dreams. No sound broke the brooding silence, save the muttering echoes from the footsteps of some solitary wayfarer, or the nightmare crash and rattle of a passing carriage. The leafless trees, as they threw aloft their delicate twig-tracery against the grey-blue sky, seemed to reach out beseeching hands of inarticulate prayer for the fuller life of bud and leaf. These were Pauline's fancies, from which she turned with a sigh to read Hugh's note again. She had never had a letter from him before, and she looked with interest at the smooth character-less copybook-handwriting, so different from Keith's masterful "fist," to which standard she at once referred it for comparison. For Keith wrote a "fist" produced by a movement of the whole arm, a jumble of massive down-strokes and crossbars, and withal nearly as legible as a page of type—a very individual style, the despair of a writing-master, or of anyone trying to copy it.

Laying down Hugh's epistle, Pauline took up the packet and began to open it, thinking, meanwhile, of Keith's interest in Violet, and of his anxiety to see her in her proper position.

"Poor Keith!" she said to herself, "how

pleased he would have been!" It did not occur to her to doubt the complete satisfactoriness of of these documents.

As she spoke she took out a paper and unfolded it. It was the certificate of a marriage contracted between Keith Dunbar, M.D., and Violet Danby, in the May of the preceding year.

Pauline sat with the paper in her hands, looking at it, fascinated into stupor at the sight of the horrible words. All Mrs. Crawfurd's talk about Keith; Hugh's words overheard so long ago—"Keith is not the fellow to let out anything he chooses to keep secret;" Tom's joke about Keith's private information when Violet came to Rosebank; and many another circumstance, as trifling and as damning, rose into judgment against Keith. How long the numbness lasted, Pauline never knew; but she came out of it looking ten years older. Drawing a long breath, she took up another paper with trembling hands. It was an acknowledgment of the same marriage, dated at Rosebank—she remembered the date, the Saturday night of the dinner party—and signed: "Keith Dunbar, M.D." And, at the sight of the well-loved

name, she bent her head over the paper and burst into a flood of bitter, bitter tears.

Hugh had taken especial pains that this signature should be genuine. It was, in fact, a facsimile. Keith used a strong copying-ink, and the strong massive characters of his signature lent themselves admirably to Hugh's fraud. When her storm of passion had subsided, Pauline turned to the remaining papers containing Hugh's account of the whole matter. After narrating the circumstances of the marriage, he proceeded to develop the affair of the mysterious bottle, supplementing the meagre results of the Drawing-room Court of Inquiry by what he was pleased to call "Mary's evidence."—"Mary had seen Keith fill the phial from the bottle on his desk; had seen him go into Violet's room with it in his hand; had found it there, and transferred it to Pauline's room by some inadvertence." Of course this necessitated a complementary hypothesis, which was duly provided, accounting for the innocent contents of the phial, the changing of the bottles, and Keith's motives in wishing to poison Violet—for that was what it all led to. Dr. Anderson's authority was invoked to support this charge; and no doubt Hugh

thought he had put the case together very neatly indeed, especially when he finished up with the assertion that—

"Violet insists that nothing shall be done about the marriage till Mr. Keith comes home, when she intends to take the matter into her own hands."

But he had been too clever by half—he had tried to prove too much.

As Pauline read on, her grief gave way to mingled emotions of indignation and surprise; she forgot herself altogether, and thought only of Violet. Her face grew strangely like her father's; its soft feminine contours were lost in the resolute set of the features, and massive energy of expression born of a strong purpose. The girl was roused, and meant seeing the thing through. When she had finished reading, she lay back in her chair to think. Hugh had made a mistake in leading her thoughts back to Rosebank; for, as she thought about the matter, his story by no means fitted in with her own knowledge of events. The very first thing that occurred to her was Violet's denial that Keith was her husband, and this naturally took her thoughts back to that terrible day, and she lived again

amid its horrors. She saw Keith snatch at the bottle to save her, and fall senseless at her feet. She kept again her lonely vigil, with his head in her lap, and, as she thought of it, all her face softened and her eyes filled with tears. She dreamed on, of the night and the days that followed, right on to her parting with Keith; and her own words came back to her:—

"I will believe nothing against you for anything less than your own words. . . . No!—not for your own writing!"

She started to her feet and began to walk swiftly to and fro.

"Is this how I keep my promise?" she said, half aloud. "But I will not believe it. . . . . I will not believe it. . . . Oh, Keith! my love! my love! I will not believe it. . . . And you cannot come to me to deny it. Oh, Keith! my Keith! I will be true to you, my love! my love!"

And she seemed to hear Keith's words again in answer:—

"Then nothing can come between us, dear; for I have nothing in my life to conceal from you. Now are you comforted?"

And she was comforted.

She came back to the window, and stood looking out for a long time, thinking. Suddenly she seemed to wake up into her own life, and she turned away.

"Something must be done about this at once," she said. "Keith's memory must be cleared, and Violet must be righted." She walked up and down the room considering: "What can I do? . . . . What can I do? . . . . I know: I will go to my uncle."

Gathering up her papers, she went off to her own room and, without more ado, commenced to pack up. At dinner-time she sent down an excuse, and at last she was ready. She rang her bell.

"Robina," she said, when the maid appeared, "will you ask Mrs. Crawfurd to come here as soon as she has finished dinner?"

"The mistress is oot, mem; her and the maister's at Mistress McSlimon's the nicht. Mr. Hugh was in tae denner, but he's gaen oot again."

"Very well, Robina; then just call me a cab. As I have the things packed, they may as well go the station."

Robina went away for the cab, under the im-

pression that this manœuvre was part of the preparations for the wedding. Pauline considered her course.

"Well," she said to herself, "they have been wonderfully kind to me; I won't go without bidding them good-bye. It is only fair to tell them, too, that I am not going to marry Hugh. I am afraid they will be disappointed. I can't think however I came to consent to it myself. . . But I must do something; I will write and tell Uncle Archie I am coming."

"My dear Uncle," she wrote, "Hugh Crawfurd gave me these papers to-day—to show me, I suppose, that nothing can be done for Violet. I would have brought them myself, but Mr. and Mrs. Crawfurd are out, and I cannot go away without bidding them good-bye, and telling them that I am not going to marry Hugh. I will start on Monday. But, Uncle, dear Uncle, will you clear Keith at once? I will not believe it, but I cannot bear that there should be such a stain on his memory, even though no one knows it but ourselves, and we do not believe it. Oh, Uncle! I love him so! And Violet must be righted. Can you do nothing about that? There is something terribly

wrong somewhere. Now I must stop. Love to my dear Elsie. I shall see you both in a few days, I hope. Your loving niece, PAULINE CARMICHAEL."

And, driving rapidly down to the station to deposit her luggage in the cloak-room, she got her letter sent off by the mail as before, and we may imagine that Mr. Keith was considerably edified and enlightened by its receipt. Truly, Hugh had done a brilliant stroke of business this time.

Pauline had seen the train depart, and was walking up the platform to the tunnel, when a gentleman, who was passing, addressed her by name :—

"Surely it is Miss Carmichael?" said he ; and Pauline, after a few seconds' scrutiny, recognised Dr. Anderson.

"I thought you were abroad," she said, in explanation of her hesitation.

"Well, I intended going when I saw you last ; but I found myself able to stay, after all."

"But I understood you were very anxious to go—it was a very good appointment, was it not?"

"Yes, it was a good appointment, but I thought it well to stay."

"And are you still living at Loch Dhuil?"

"No; that is my father's practice really. I have settled down here for the present—out Partick way."

"Ah," said Pauline, "I don't know that part very well, but I seem to remember Dame Violet talking about it. She lived there, I think, just before she was married."

"Ah, how is Mrs. Hugh?" said the Doctor.

"Mrs. who?" asked Pauline.

"Mrs. Hugh Crawfurd—the lady you used to call Dame Violet." Then, noticing Pauline's astonishment: "Didn't you know she was Hugh's wife?"

For once Pauline fairly broke down. She turned away from the Doctor, and, leaning her head on the rail that protected the rear of the platform from the yard of shunted carriages, she wept long and silently, while the worthy doctor waited in perplexity, taking care, meanwhile, to shield her from observation. Knowing the girl's fortitude, he shrewdly suspected that there was considerable cause for this outburst. At last, she mastered her emotion, and, as she raised her head, even in that dim light the worthy doctor could see the new life that shone in the beautiful, tearful face.

"Forgive me, Doctor," she said, "you have taken such a load off my mind. Tell me again: —Violet is not Keith's wife?"

"Keith's wife! Good heavens! no. She is Mrs. Hugh Crawfurd to my certain knowledge. Whatever could have made you think such a thing of poor Keith?"

For answer, Pauline told him all the story. The Doctor listened with professional patience till she had done. Then he broke out with a vigour that probably took the place of the profanity wherewith he would have liked to "free his mind."

"Well, of all the execrable villainies I ever heard of, I think this is about the worst." There was a hiatus before "worst," so that that word was probably a translation. "My dear young lady, you have had a very narrow escape. But indeed you have saved yourself, and that when, as far as I could see, nothing but your own truth could have saved you. And now, perhaps, I had better tell you the rights of the case."

And now it was Pauline's turn to be astonished, as she heard the true story of that Rosebank Sunday and its sequel.

Walking up the hill to Blythswood Square they saw Hugh Crawfurd at the corner of Renfield Street. He had evidently been to some meeting at the chapel, and he was so busy talking to his companion—one of the Little Zion young ladies—that he saw nothing of Pauline or the Doctor, although he passed very near them, crossing their path at right angles. He was swinging his hymn-book in his hand—a large handsome octavo it was, bound in crimson morocco. Pauline noticed the hymn-book, as the lamplight fell upon it, because of the fine tone of colour it made, with its gilt edges, against the warm grey of his ulster, set off by his delicate cream-coloured glove with its dark sewing. For a religious young man, Hugh was a good deal addicted to the vanities of dress, and certainly his dress was only in keeping with his good figure and handsome face. He looked decidedly interesting and *débonnaire* as he passed, in animated talk with his companion. The sight of him set the others talking about Violet's affairs, which, the Doctor seemed to think, were in a bad way. In fact, the Doctor showed a considerable interest in Violet's affairs, not to say a considerable acquaintance with them. He

agreed with Pauline, however, that her uncle would probably put the whole case in James Crawfurd's hands, and that, as matters had gone, that would make the best solution of the difficulty. As they were parting at Mr. Crawfurd's door, the Doctor started a new subject:—

"Miss Carmichael," he said, "I don't want to give you pain, but I want to ask a question—I am afraid, a somewhat painful one."

"What is the question?" Pauline asked quietly.

"Have you had any intimation of Dunbar's death, beyond that notice in the paper? Did your uncle say anything about it, for instance?"

Pauline flushed, and then the flush died away and left her paler than ever.

"No," she said, somewhat unsteadily. "My uncle never wrote to me at all. I suppose he could not bear to do so. He was so fond of. . . of Keith. . . But he might have written me a note when he sent his consent to that marriage."

"Good heavens! Miss Carmichael, you surely do not imagine your uncle ever consented to that?"

"I saw his letter," said Pauline, "and I am sure he was offended with me."

"Then you saw more than he ever did. . . . But I must go. I fancy Hugh has gone to see his wife, and I want to waylay him. He has still a chance to save himself, as I am sure you will keep his secret for Dame Violet's sake. She need never know that he does not make the avowal of his own freewill. It would go a long way towards securing her happiness. If I could only do anything towards that," he went on, half absently, as though he were thinking aloud, "I should have done some good by staying at home."

"Dr. Anderson," said Pauline, taking his hand, as she looked at him with quiet, serious eyes and speaking with grave compassion, "you love her. You have stayed here to watch over her?"

"Yes," said he, in a loud voice, but he straightened himself up as he spoke, and looked quietly into Pauline's face. "Yes, I love her. But she is Hugh's wife—I only want her to be happy with him."

"I think it is very noble of you," said Pauline, "and I wish you every success. Will you see me to-morrow and tell me what hope there is? You know I could telegraph to my

uncle to do nothing about those papers for the present—if that would be of any use."

Making an appointment for the morrow, the Doctor went on his way; and Pauline entered the house with a new hope in her heart. She went straight into the dining-room, and, merely taking off her bonnet, sat down on the hearth-rug, leaning on a low chair. The firelight flickered on her sweet face as she lost herself in tender thoughts of her dead lover. She could believe in him now to her heart's content: there was no ugly evidence to strive against. She had not arrived at the significance of Doctor Anderson's question, though something of that came to her afterwards.

Meanwhile Hugh had gone to see Violet. He found her sitting in the big easy chair by the fire, with his dressing-gown thrown across her knees. The little kitchen was as bright and cheerful as ever, and Violet as beautiful. But there was an anxious and weary look in her soft grey eyes, and an air of languor in her figure, that changed her sadly from the bright girl who stood in the doorway to welcome Hugh on the night of the rejected addresses. Violet struggled to her feet as he entered, and the dressing-gown

fell across the fender, but she was too full of her husband to notice it.

"Oh, Hugh dear! I am so glad to see you!" she said. "I have wanted you so much; I feel quite ill to-night."

They talked about various matters for a little while, and then Violet introduced the subject nearest her heart.

"Do you know," she said, "I have got quite a nice little plan, Hugh dear. You must know, your mother has been sending me all sorts of nice messages lately with Pauline. And the last message was she is coming to see me. Now, when she comes, I am going to get her to promise to come to see me when I am ill, and then, when the baby has come, I will tell her it is her grandchild. I know everything will be all right after that."

Here was a nice prospect for Hugh! He mentally resolved that the "nice little plan" should, by whatever means, be rendered impossible.

"But I want you to go to Scarsdale for that," was all he said at the time. Violet shook her head gently and smiled.

"It is too late for that," she said. "I could

not go. And besides, my nice little plan would be of no use there. You know, Hugh dear, I cannot allow my child to be born in concealment. For the sake of your own child, dear Hugh, your own dear little child, your mother must know, even if no one else does, though I am sure she would not allow the secret to be kept any longer. And then, Hugh dear, think of the happy days we might have together. . . . That nice little cottage out of town, you know—you might live there so happily with your true wife and your little pretty baby. And your father and mother would come and see us, and—"

"You talk like a fool, Violet," interpolated Hugh, who was simply exasperated by his wife's forward-looking hopes.

"Like a fool! Hugh," said Violet, in amazement, "whatever do you mean?"

"I mean this," he said roughly. "You needn't talk of sending for my mother, for I cannot do anything in the matter at present."

"But you must have something done, dear, at whatever cost. We must take care of the child's interests."

Hugh took up his hat to go, and Violet rose to bid him good-bye, considering the affair

settled, and that she was to take her own way.

"Look here," he said sharply, "has it occurred to you that you might have some difficulty in satisfying my mother that you are married?"

"That is for you to do," she said, looking at him quietly, though she grew very pale and had to support herself by the arm of the chair.

"Just so," said Hugh, "and, since you force me to go into the subject, I may as well tell you, you are not married at all. The best thing you can do, is to keep yourself quiet till I can marry you properly. It will be quite time enough, after that, to talk about acknowledging you." Hugh had meant to be dignified, but he only attained peevishness.

Then Violet's languor vanished. She drew herself up and looked at her sorry husband with a firm, unflinching steadiness of gaze that was difficult to meet unabashed, even with the support of a conscience carefully adjusted to the occasion. Her face was white, and drawn, and haggard; her very lips were bloodless. Every nerve in her body was at its utmost tension; she seemed turning to stone in the sheer intensity of her determination to bear up against the

sense of the horrible words that seemed burnt into her brain. She stood there as silent, and still, and calm as a statue—save for the terrible agony of her eyes—while the currents of her life were being slowly reversed. Her eyes fascinated Hugh—he could not look away. She looked him down as she might have done a snarling cur. Then her life took on its new flow and she spoke:—

"Go," she said. "I will never marry you. That would be a worse disgrace than this."

Hugh went, thinking that on the whole the business had been got over as easily as could well be expected. "There was bound to be a row of some sort," he said to himself. And in the course of the next half-hour he had got to Bankside Crescent, told the story he had made up to the servant in charge, and was busy at Keith's desk.

Violet stood as Hugh left her—pale, dry-eyed, and haggard, in a calm despair, worse than any outburst of passion. When the echoes of his footsteps had died away down the long stair, she went quietly across to the bedroom, and dressed herself to go out. She left the house without again looking into the little kitchen, or she

might have noticed that the dressing-gown was still lying across the fender, and that a glowing cinder had fallen upon it, and was burning a hole in it. Arrived in the street. she walked firmly away in the direction of Blythswood Square. Dr. Anderson, looking for Hugh, met Violet, as it happened, instead; and, struck by the look of agony in her face, refrained from addressing her, but turned and followed her.

"There must have been an awful row," he said to himself. "Whatever can Hugh have been saying? However, she seems to be making for Crawfurd's, and perhaps that is the best thing she can do."

Presently Violet began to walk more slowly, then more slowly still; at last she stopped, as if bewildered, and, putting her hand up to her head, she seemed to consider her route.

"Oh dear!" the Doctor heard her say, "how my poor head turns round! Wherever was I going to? Oh dear! oh dear! I can't remember at all."

Then she set off in a new direction, and Dr. Anderson followed in growing anxiety. She went waveringly, working her way westwards towards the Crescents, but every now and then

turned to retrace her steps for a time, only to resume her westward route again. She seemed alternately dominated by two impulses, but the one that sent her westward seemed the more persistent. Just before she got to the Crescents, Violet altered her direction again, and, in the same wavering fashion, worked her way to the Dumbarton Road, and out towards Partick.

"First Crawfurd's, and then Keith's," muttered the Doctor. "Where the dickens is she going to now? . . . Ah, didn't Miss Carmichael say she used to live down here ?—that accounts for it."

Violet left the high road and struck into a labyrinth of lanes. She began to increase her speed again, and no longer retraced her steps.

"Where is she going to?" the Doctor went on. "She will be out on the meadows directly. . . . Doesn't look like going to her old diggings after all."

The night was fine and clear, and the river shone in the moonlight between its flanking stretches of grey-green meadow. Out here on the lonely meads, Violet began to sing, and the Doctor drew nearer as he caught the ominous words:—

"Till I shall be sleeping
In the cold, dark grave."

That was all she sang; only those two lines, over and over again, and all the while she was making for the river. At last she stood on the river wall, and Doctor Anderson caught sight of her face. A new horror seized him as he looked. Violet was mad.

At eleven o'clock Pauline was still dreaming in the firelight. She was roused by a knock at the front door, following the sound of rapid wheels. Robina came in.

"A gentleman wants to speak to you, Miss Pauline," she said, "but he won't come in."

Pauline, going out to the hall, found Dr. Anderson, who in a few words told her what had happened.

"Robina," she said, as she tied on her bonnet again, "tell Mrs. Crawfurd I have gone to Dame Violet, who is very ill:—you remember Miss Danby, of course?"

And before Robina had found anything to say Pauline was gone.

"I have got her in good hands," said Dr. Anderson, concluding his story, as they bowled along in the hansom. "Mrs. McGrule is a good motherly soul and a capable woman into the

bargain. She is discreet, too, and that counts for a good deal in the present case. The cottage is close to the meadows, so I did not have to bring her through the streets at all. Then, as I came along, I called on Dr. Bryce and got him to go down at once. But it's much if we can manage to pull her through! . . Still there's a chance."

CHAPTER X.

NEMESIS.

"J'ai caché ma passion à l'ombre des autels."
Balzac.

FOR a long time the desk resisted all Hugh's efforts. He felt almost sick with anxiety, for the time was running short and everything depended on his obtaining possession of those certificates. Still he persevered, though his hand trembled—and great drops stood out on his cold pale forehead—as he fitted key after key without success. Was it possible to be so near success and yet to fail after all? He must not fail. His only safety lay in success. That would close Violet's lips, and, after what had happened, Hugh knew of nothing but his marriage with Pauline that could do so. Keith was not likely to act unless he could act with effect, and to get possession of the certificates was to destroy his power. And Hugh had no retreat, even if he had wanted one. At last the lock yielded.

"Now, master Keith, I have won the game!" said Hugh, as he triumphantly lifted the lid.

But his triumph was succeeded by dismay—he absolutely trembled with horror, as he looked into the desk. The papers were not in their place. Sick at heart, he turned over the contents of the desk with trembling, frantic eagerness; but he found no certificates. This was ruin. He had irrevocably quarrelled with Violet; he could not retreat from his marriage with Pauline. What should he do? Should he make his escape? Or should he go on, and defy them all? He would be pretty well out of reach in New York.

While he was mentally debating these questions, Hugh was no less busy with his hands, fidgeting about the desk, trying drawers and partitions, if haply he might find the papers in some secret recess. He found the secret recess —suddenly, when he was least expecting it, a slide flew back and discovered, not the documents, but a blue glass bottle. How Hugh started as his old guilt seem to start from its ambush! The bottle was not his acquaintance of Rosebank, but that it held the same deadly compound he had no doubt. How vainly we

try to evade fate! Keith had placed the poison in this secret recess, as a precaution against any possible mischief, and behold his care had but provided a supreme temptation and almost inevitable evil.

Many transactions which pass muster in the glamour of success, look singularly sinful in the hard light of failure. Villainy never seems so damning as when it is about to be found out. Hugh began to see his conduct as it would be reflected in the judgments of other people. He had an uneasy consciousness that his villainy had not had its price; he had been cheated out of the reward he had earned. He had a sort of idea that, when this transaction had been carried through, he would close accounts with the devil; and that the remorse he intended to experience thereafter, would be, as it were, an investment of spiritual capital bearing high interest. But here was the price of his success suddenly raised beyond anything he had ever contemplated. And yet Hugh was sorely tempted to pay the price. Probably, at no other time could the temptation have come to him with such force and urgency. He had always been given to taking his temptations

in instalments—a complete sin was as much out of his line as a complete and positive virtue. But in this temptation the crime showed itself at once in all the massive hideousness, and yet, withal, it offered him a way out of his difficulty —the means of avoiding the discovery he so much dreaded.

A vision rose before his eyes—of Violet asleep, of someone creeping into the house at dead of night, of the poison poured on a handkerchief, and the handkerchief laid on her face; and then——. He put the bottle on one side, and went on with his search among Keith's papers, but his thoughts were busy working out the sequel of the vision. The working out of these problems of theoretical villainy had become a habit from which he could not escape. There would be no trace of anything wrong, or it might easily be made to appear that Violet had——. The bottle was in his way, and he put it outside of the desk. Keith would not be home for three months yet. And what could he do, even if he suspected? . . . . And the certificates would not help him then. . . . . Nor that old evidence either . . . . New York was a long

way off too, and he would take Pauline there at once. Hugh did not accept the plan, and he did not reject it. He let himself drift, and yet expected to escape Scylla and Charybdis alike. He shut the desk, and set himself to consider—not whether or not he should murder his wife, but whether or not he should take the bottle away with him.

Hugh was preparing to leave the room, when, for the first time, his eyes fell on Pauline's sunset picture, which stood on the easel, just where Pauline and Keith had left it on the night of their parting. Conscience-stricken, Hugh put down the poison and stood irresolute, looking at the picture. He saw again the sunset from Violet's window, as he had seen it when he first wished death for his wife. Again the words of her sad song rang in his ears:—

> "Till I shall be sleeping
> In the cold, dark grave."

Again the scenes in the laboratory came before him, and he heard her tender words:

"You wouldn't have your poor little true wife poisoned, would you?"

And he thought of her loving tenderness in his humiliation. And with these memories

came, in stern denunciation, the reiterated words of the preacher:

"For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

And, for the time being, startled into veracity, Hugh Crawfurd at last found himself face to face with the reality of the situation.

His irresolution passed into stillness, and he stood looking at the picture as though it were some oracle of life and death. All his life passed in review before him, and for once—no longer glozing over his own wrongdoing with some fetish-formula about the depravity of human nature—he honestly compared himself with others. In the presence of this awful crime, his fictions slipped from him like a garment, and he began really to understand something of the wrong he had done. For once he was fairly confronted with the evil he meant to do, and it appalled him. In his recoil the very magnitude of the crime forced a choice upon him, and the choice, once exercised—howbeit, more from horror of the extent of the evil, than from love of the right—had yet its effects in choice to follow. Hugh had found his will. In the mere exercise of his faculty of deliberate

choice, he had developed from a molluscous to a vertebrate stage of morality. The currents of *his* life took on a new flow.

Hugh sat down and wrote a note to Keith. He then replaced the bottle in its recess, and placed the note beside it. Then, after another long look at the picture, he went away. There was a quiet intensity in his manner that altered him greatly. He had hardly left the house when he discovered that he had left his hymn-book behind him.

"Never mind," he said to himself, "I have done with all that. I have been nothing better than a hypocrite. I will have no more to do with the chapel; I am not fit for it. And now, what shall I do?"

He paced slowly up and down the Crescent, thinking; and, as he thought, certain old words came into his mind:—

"I will arise and go to my father."

"Yes," he said, "I will tell my father. I will go to New York and take Violet with me; perhaps after all I may be able to make her happy: that will be something. My mother shall go to her, and the chapel folks may say what they like. God knows they cannot say

worse than I deserve. . . . . And now. . . Yes, I will go to her now. . . . Poor Violet! . . . . Poor Violet!"

Then he walked on, wrapped in his thoughts, along St. George's Road, and across by West Graham Street to the New City Road. He had just reached the corner of the street where Violet lived, when, happening to look up, he saw the house was in flames. He had been so absorbed in his thoughts that he had not heard the rattle and rush of the fire-engine coming up behind him. Springing out into the middle of the street to get a better view, he knocked against a woman who was standing there, and then found himself under the horses' heads:—one wild despairing cry as he turned to escape—a crashing blow and a fall—and the engine passed over him. Pitifully, strong men took him up:—the more pitifully because it had got about in the crowd that he had saved the woman's life at the cost of his own. He was evidently badly hurt. But his face was uninjured, and, as they laid him on the stretcher, the shadow of death had touched it with a pallor that gave it a new beauty as of a marble mask.

"Eh, the bonny, braw lad!" said an ancient crone, as she smoothed his dark hair and wiped the death-damp from his pale forehead with the end of her shawl. "There'll be mair nor his mither greeting for him this nicht!"

They carried him away to the Infirmary, but, ere they reached it, Hugh Crawfurd was dead.

Poor Hugh! was it a kindly fate that cut the thread of his life at the first real awakening of his better nature? or was it that the Master of life, not content with giving the robe and the ring after the long and weariful desert journey, had sent his servant death, as a swift angel of deliverance to bring the prodigal at once from his husks in the far country to the better life of the Father's house? Who knows? Would the fire-engine's rush have been less fatal if Hugh had met it with the poison in his hand? Or would he, coming with the poison, have come later, and so have escaped? Again, who knows? The laws of life mock our small theories with the irony of their larger sequences, as we try to measure their curves with ordinates of our trivial notions of right and wrong. It is difficult to grasp the idea that motives and repentance are alike impotent to affect the consequences

of actions ; or the cognate idea, that the " specific gravity " of a soul, so to speak, is something apart from that soul's manifestations in deeds. However, poor Hugh's life-work was done ; and, being what it was, it did seem like the irony of fate that he should die in the odour of sanctity, and be buried as one of the very elect.

Hugh's funeral was the occasion of a special function at the chapel, at which Tom Challoner —having only that morning arrived in Glasgow —assisted with much outward gravity of demeanour, and much inward wonderment as to what effect it would have upon the assembly were he to reveal Hugh's secrets. But the children of Zion remained in blissful ignorance. Hugh was to them an estimable young man, whom an inscrutable Providence had removed from a career of usefulness. Perhaps Hugh was at his best in Little Zion; at any rate the people liked him. He was frank and pleasant with high and low ; he spoke their spiritual language with the greater fluency, perhaps, because he never attempted to grasp the ideas it conveyed. He never kicked over the traces, like so many young men : never fell from grace. He never had any doubts as to the validity of the Little

Zion revelation: never found flaws in its "scheme of salvation," or cavilled at it for being a scheme, as others had done, who had contracted the prevalent disease of nineteenth-century thought. Then there was his heroism; and his untimely death on the eve of his bridal. Altogether such a mysterious dispensation of Providence could not be sufficiently accentuated by an ordinary funeral. Some of the good folks, indeed, had an uneasy impression that perhaps Providence had been somewhat blind to its own interests in this premature removal of an undoubted exemplar of early piety; but they reassured themselves with the thought that it was probably intended that the funeral-sermon of the following Sunday should be such a season of refreshing as should justify the occasion. The funeral-sermon was a great success, and Hugh's blameless life and heroic death were therein handled with much unction, and to such godly purpose, that the community afterwards erected a monument over his grave and adorned it with an inscription setting forth in letters of gold, his numerous virtues, his saintly life, and his heroic death.

Tom Challoner, waiting in the dining-room of

the Crawfurd mansion with the mourners who had been invited to attend at the house, did not, of course, expect to see Pauline. It is not the custom for ladies to appear on such occasions. But he took an opportunity of making enquiries, and Robina told him how Pauline had been sent for on Saturday night. Afterwards, in the mourning-coach, the conversation of his companions—young McSlimon and two other young men, his contemporaries—gave Tom his first intimation of the intended marriage.

"But I don't understand," said Tom. "Miss Carmichael is engaged to Keith."

"Very likely she was," said one of the others, "but then Keith is dead."

"What?" exclaimed Tom. "Keith dead! . . Keith is no more dead than you are."

"Do you mean to say, Tom, that Keith was not killed when that theatre was burnt down at Vienna? Why his name was in the official list of victims. But I *am* glad."

"So am I," said another.

"It's the best news I have heard for many a long day," said young McSlimon.

"He wasn't in the theatre," said Tom, "but

he was out when the officials came round making enquiries; and that was how his name came to be in the list. But I didn't know it was published here. . . . . But he wrote to Miss Carmichael."

"No, he didn't write," said McSlimon. "I have heard Mrs. Crawfurd say that it was just his not writing that made them really believe he was dead. It was for Miss Carmichael's sake they hurried on the marriage. Hugh was to take her abroad, and they had great hopes that the change might do her good." . . . .

Altogether Tom had a good deal to think about as the coffin was borne down the long aisle, while the strains of the Funeral March Sonata echoed through the black-draped chapel. All through the service his thoughts were busy, and when the coffin was carried out to the muffled throbs of the Dead March in "Saul," he followed mechanically, and took his seat in the carriage without very clearly understanding what he was doing. Slowly the mournful procession passed on, along George Street, and up High Street, down the Via Dolorosa between the Cathedral and the Barony Church, over the Bridge of Sighs to the beautiful Necropolis. And

there, amid the fitful sunlight of the cold March afternoon, Hugh Crawfurd was laid to his long rest, on the sunny slope of the hill.

From the cemetery Tom went straight to Violet's house. He wanted to see Pauline to tell her that Keith was not dead. He expected to find her with Violet, who, he supposed, would have taken refuge with some of her neighbours. The fire had not been serious, and had been confined to the suite of rooms in which it originated. Tom made his way up the long stair to the top flat. A woman was standing at an open door talking to an elderly gentleman, who was dressed after a fashion not at all usual in Glasgow. A broad-brimmed white hat, spotless white collar and tie, a brown velveteen shooting-coat with bulging pockets, drab riding-breeches and gaiters, and very square-toed boots, made up a costume that was decidedly agricultural. The man was tall, and stout, and broad-shouldered, and his face looked honest and shrewd and friendly. Tom seemed to know the face somehow. The woman broke off her talk, and looked at Tom, waiting for him to speak.

"No," she said, in answer to Tom's question,

"naebody kens whaur she is. She maun hae gaen oot or ever the fire begun. I howp nae harm has came till her, but she hasna' been seen about here, and she wasna' fit to be wanderin' aboot. . . . . This gentleman," she went on, with an air of introducing the two men, "is her faither. He saw aboot the fire in a paper, an' he's come a' the way frae Yorkshire tae seek her."

Whereupon Tom introduced himself to Mr. Danby, and assured him of Violet's safety, as far as the fire was concerned.

"She may have gone to Scarsdale," said Tom, in default of any better hypothesis to account for Violet's disappearance. "Probably she is there by this time and Miss Carmichael with her."

"No," said Mr. Danby, "I don't think that is where she is. . . . But there's her husband: happen we could get her address from him? Do you know, Mr. Crawfurd?"

Before Tom could reply, the woman intervened:—

"There was a young gentleman killed by the fire-engine o' Satterday nicht. They said his name was Crawfurd:—a bonny braw lad. . .

Mebbe ye kent him, sir?" she added to Tom, noticing the white crape on his cuffs.

"Yes," said Tom, "I have just come from his funeral."

"Eh?" said Mr. Danby sharply, "was he?. . . was he. . . . .?"

"Yes," said Tom, "it was Hugh."

"Oh! my poor lass! my poor lass! He was her husband, hinny," he added aside to the woman. "My poor lass! My poor lass!"

CHAPTER XI.

EQUILIBRIUM.

"Cujus animam gementem
Contristantem et dolentem,
Pentransivit gladius."
Hymni Ecclesiæ.

WHEN the first sharp agony of the shock of Hugh's death had passed away, Mrs. Crawfurd found that she wanted Pauline. But day after day and week after week went by without bringing any news of the wanderer. As soon as she was able to go out—which was not for some weeks after the funeral—Mrs. Crawfurd determined to pay her long-promised visit to Violet in hope of finding her fugitive guest. She had noticed the name of the street in the newspaper accounts of the fire, but had not observed that it was Violet's house which had been burned out, and, although she had been somewhat exercised in her mind to account for Hugh's presence in the neighbourhood, it had not occurred to her that Violet could have anything to do with it. She rather inclined to the suppo-

sition that he was aware of Pauline's summons, and that he was going to her. At first she had thought that Pauline was keeping aloof from a fear of intruding upon her grief, but after a time that idea became untenable. Then she came to the conclusion that Violet's illness must be very serious, and the wish arose in her heart to befriend the poor unacknowledged wife in her affliction.

So one pleasant afternoon in April, on her way home from her airing in the park, Mrs. Crawfurd had herself driven to Violet's house. A group of women were standing gossiping at the " close-mouth," but none of them could give her the information she wanted, when, after finding that Violet's house was empty, she began making enquiries of them on her way back to her carriage. The information they did give, however, was sufficiently alarming. They all agreed in surmising that Violet had not returned to the neighbourhood for the simple reason that she had been taken ill, and they gave proofs of the probable correctness of their opinion, which had naturally been suppressed when Tom Challoner and Mr. Danby had made their enquiries. Just as Mrs. Crawfurd was on the

point of driving off, a woman left the group, and, coming up to the carriage, gave her some very important information:—

"I dinna ken, mem," she said in a whisper, "whether it 'll help ye tae fin' the leddy, but the auld gentleman 'at was here speiring aboot her, he said she was the wife o' the young gentleman 'at was kill't at the fire. Mabbe ye wad ken him—his name was Crawfurd?"

The first effect of a sudden calamity is numbness. A mental shock produces the same nervous depression as a physical blow. Pain and anguish supervene with sensibility; and sensibility is a matter of consciousness. For Mrs. Crawfurd the worst was still to come, but the present was bad enough. She could not speak; that was beyond her. But she could keep her face straight, and she did it. She bowed to the woman as the carriage drove off, and then sat looking straight before her, the very image of stony-eyed, dumb agony. She seemed to have known it all along: the significance of a hundred little circumstances, unseen before, started up to confirm Hugh's guilt. Then came the recollection of the Rosebank affair—she knew enough of its details to make it a very sinister addition

to the burden of her grief—and Hugh's well-remembered reluctance to aid in its investigation was fully accounted for. Bit by bit her memory built up against him an accusation that went far beyond any mere changing of the bottles. Alas! poor mother! She had loved her boy—nay, she loved him still. But her idol was fallen, betrayed by its feet of clay, and the golden head was shattered in the dust. Hugh's death had been a sore trial, but it was no calamity in comparison with his sin.

Mrs. Crawfurd kept her grief to herself. She resolved that her husband should be spared all knowledge of his son's wrong-doing beyond what was necessarily divulged to enable her to establish Violet's rights. Before the eyes of the household the idol still shone from its accustomed pedestal, and only the stricken mother could see the cracks and joins in its fabric or could realise the thinness of the layer of gold upon the brass, and iron, and clay.

One morning Tom Challoner received a note from Mrs. Crawfurd asking him to call upon her as soon as he could make it convenient. So, after lunch, he walked up to Blythswood Square, wondering, all the way, what on earth the old

lady could want. He was shown up to the small drawing-room. Mrs. Crawfurd sat by the fire, with her back to the light, knitting some sort of woolwork with thick wooden needles. With her blond hair smoothly arranged under a black cap, her oval well-featured face, and her well-set-up figure in its black draperies of silk and crape, she was a personable woman for her time of life. Tom thought she was not quite the Mrs. Crawfurd he knew so well. Perhaps some of the hardness had gone out of her face, though her attitude had lost none of its characteristic bolt-upright rigidity: in fact, she really did not know how to lounge—the most inviting easy-chair never tempted her to lean back; and Tom found her sitting straight up, with squared shoulders, as erect as a dragoon upon parade.

"This is very kind of you, Thomas," said Mrs. Crawfurd, as they shook hands. "I hope you have not inconvenienced yourself in coming so soon."

"Oh, not at all," said Tom, taking up his favourite position—leaning against the mantelpiece. "I shall be very glad if I can be of any service to you, Mrs. Crawfurd."

"Thank you, Thomas. Well, first of all, I want Miss Carmichael's address."

"I am sorry to say I don't know it."

"Could you not get it for me from Mr. Keith?"

"Mr. Keith would give a good deal to know it himself. Miss Carmichael has not been heard of since she left this house."

"I wonder where she can have gone to? I have not been about much lately, you know, Thomas, and it was only the other day I found out that Miss Carmichael had packed up her things and taken them away that same night—some time before she was sent for."

"That is easily explained, Mrs. Crawfurd. Miss Carmichael intended going to Mr. Keith that night. She wrote to him, saying that she had delayed her departure till Monday, because you were out, and she would not go without bidding you good-bye."

"Then I suppose she is with her uncle now?"

"No; she never arrived, and she did not write again. So Mr. Keith and Elsie came home to see what was the matter. They have been home these three weeks. But, all we can

do, we cannot find out where she is. And Violet's people have heard nothing of her. Her father was here, and he promised to let me know at once when he heard anything. We can only suppose that Violet is very ill, and that Pauline does not know that any of us have come home yet."

"I wonder why Pauline wanted to go away so suddenly?" Mrs. Crawfurd sat for a minute or two looking into the fire. Evidently the question was addressed to herself rather than to Tom. Then, still looking into the fire, she spoke again:—

"Thomas, I want to ask you a very serious question."

"Yes?" said Tom, inquiringly.

"I am going to ask a plain question, and I want a plain answer. Never mind anybody's feelings. I want the truth."

"Well?"

"I want to know what my son had to do with Violet Danby. . . . . Tell me," she added, looking up, as Tom did not speak immediately.

"She was his wife," was the quiet response.

"His wife? You are quite sure of that, Thomas?"

"Quite sure."

"Quite sure there was a valid marriage?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Thomas; I cannot tell you what a satisfaction that is to me."

"Surely, Mrs. Crawfurd, you never thought there was anything else than a marriage?"

"What was I to think, Thomas?" Mrs. Crawfurd let her hands fall softly into her lap, and looked meditatively into the fire, as she went on speaking. "What was I to think, when I found out about Violet, and yet remembered that Hugh very nearly married Pauline? I am sure it is a mercy the marriage did not take place. To think that my son should be a deceiver of women!" Then she looked up indignantly. "Why did you all lend yourselves to his secret?—I suppose you all knew?—If some of you had only told me about it, my boy might have been alive, and well, and happy, to-day."

"Yes, we all knew, except Pauline. But what could we do? It was much the best way to leave Hugh to acknowledge his wife himself. Mr. Keith told Hugh, at last, that he would keep the secret no longer. . . But then we all had to go away."

"Well, I suppose you could do nothing. . . . But I can't understand how Hugh came to think of marrying Pauline. . . ."

On this point Tom had no suggestion to offer, and so kept silent. After a minute or so Mrs. Crawfurd resumed:—

"Was that the reason Mr. Keith would not let Hugh ask Elsie to marry him?"

"Yes," said Tom, who understood the question in spite of the apparent inconsequence.

"How is Elsie?"

"Much better."

"I suppose you will be asking for her some of these days?"

"I have asked for her," said Tom, with a quiet tone of proprietorship.

"I wish you both every happiness, Thomas. But I suppose you will not be getting married just yet?"

"No, not just yet. We must wait for Keith and Pauline at any rate."

Mrs. Crawfurd looked up in bewilderment:—

"Keith!" she exclaimed. "Keith is dead."

"That was all a mistake, Mrs. Crawfurd. He will be home to-night."

"Then why didn't he write to Pauline?"

"He did write to her."

"She never got the letters, at any rate."

"So it appears," said Tom.

The old woman lifted a misery-stricken face, and looked at him with a mute bewildered appeal.

"Thomas," she said at last, in a hoarse, husky whisper, "do you think Hugh knew that Keith was not dead?"

Tom could say nothing. Mrs. Crawfurd opened a desk that stood on a table near her, and took out a letter.

"I found this among Pauline's letters that have come since she left." She spoke in the same husky whisper:—"Do you know that writing?"

Tom took the letter: the postmark showed it had arrived on the day after the funeral.

"It is Keith's," he said.

A silence of some length ensued. Mrs. Crawfurd looked steadily into the fire. Her face grew hard and set, as though she was resolutely enduring some acute agony. She spoke at last and her voice seemed to echo the suffering of her face:—

"You have no comfort for me, Thomas; and I

have none for myself. God has stricken me sore for my sin against that poor innocent girl. Oh! my son! my son! dead in your sins! No time to repent! Do you think he could repent?" she asked in a low aside, looking at Tom with anxious, beseeching eyes. But Tom could say nothing, and she went on:—"You must find Violet for me, Thomas; perhaps I can still make some amends to *her*. . . . . My sin has been visited on my son, and his soul will be required at my hands. . . . . Oh, God!" she exclaimed passionately, "take my soul for my son's. . . What am I saying?" she broke off—"it is fixed: 'As the tree falls, so it lies.'" . . . Again there was silence for a time, and again it was Mrs. Crawfurd who broke the silence.

"Leave me now, Tom," she said, "but come again. And be sure you find Violet for me."

. . . . . .

After all it was Mrs. Crawfurd herself who found out Violet's hiding-place. Of course she found it out by accident, and in the last place she would have thought of looking for it; and equally, of course, she was very nearly too late about it. Driving down town one afternoon, she stopped her carriage to speak to the little

newspaper-girl in whom Pauline had interested her. After some questions as to the state of things among the girl's neighbours in the Vennel, Mrs. Crawfurd happened to remark:—

"You will have missed Miss Carmichael very much?"

"Ay," said the girl. "But she'll be comin' back sune. The leddy she's been nursin' 's gettin' weel. But she's been gey an' bad. She was oot o' her head for lang, an' she's had a bairn, and the bairn's dead Eh, it's been fearsome!"

"Why, child!—how do you know all this?"

"Weel, mem, ye ken there's Mattha Stormon gi'es the folks the money an' things Miss 'Carmèhhle' sen's them. He aye tells us aboot her when he's been till her about aucht. I think it's the wumman o' the hoose 'at tells him."

To drive off at once to find Mattha Stormon was of course a necessity. But Mattha was not to the fore just then. However, he turned up at Blythswood Square in the evening; and Mrs. Crawfurd had the pleasure of sending Tom the address the first thing next morning.

Tom's first procedure was to telegraph for Mr. Danby; then he wrote a note to Elsie:—

"I have grand news for you. The lost are found. If you can trundle your perambulator down here about one o'clock, I will give you some lunch, and tell you all about it. . . . Bring Keith if he has not gone out.

"Yours,

"DIDYMUS.

"N.B. The perambulator is essential."

Mr. Keith had set up a little carriage for Elsie, with a pair of handsome ponies. It was this elegant equipage which Tom had profanely styled the perambulator. Punctually at one o'clock Tom assumed his hat and gloves, and went out to the street to await Elsie's arrival. But he was not kept waiting. He had not compared his watch with the Exchange clock more than twice, when he saw the grey ponies come rattling round the corner by the Bank, and in less than a minute Elsie had pulled up by the pavement where he stood.

"Oh, Tom dear! have you really found them?" she asked, eagerly leaning forward, as she waited for his reply. Tom nodded. "And does my daddy know?" she went on, her pale face almost brightening into colour with the pleasurable excitement.

"No," said Tom, "I am sorry to have to give such a bad account of a gentleman I wish to respect; but your father has been gadding about all morning like a will-of-the-wisp. I believe he and *my* father, with three or four others—dissipated elderly gentlemen like themselves—have gone off to lunch riotously at the Clarendon." And Tom tried to look doleful, but the effort was a conspicuous failure.

"Well," said Elsie, gravely, "*we* won't go to the Clarendon."

"We will not," said Tom. "We must do nothing that might impair their self-respect. It might be that they would feel our presence as a restraint perhaps,—even a reproof." By this time Tom had done petting the ponies, who were great friends of his; so he got into the perambulator. "Now, my dear, we'll be off, if you have no objection."

"What are your lordship's orders?" asked Elsie.

"Buchanan Street. I have ordered the lunch in a private room, as I have a lot to tell you."

"Look here, Excellency," said Elsie, as they sat down to table, "when are you going to begin? I have not asked a single question, and

yet you have told me nothing. Do you call that rewarding virtue?"

"Well, here goes," said Tom. "I got the address from Mrs. Crawfurd of all people—the Lord knows where she got it. . . I thought I would just go and see how they were, so I chartered a hansom for the occasion. . . but when I got fairly into Partick I got out, thinking I would walk. . . Just as I was paying the man, who should come up but Dr. Anderson. I could hardly believe my eyes—I thought he was in India; and, what's more, he didn't seem able to give any satisfactory reason why he wasn't there. However, it was Anderson in the flesh. Ghosts don't fall in love, as far as I am aware, and Anderson's over head and ears in love with your friend Madame Violet. . . . . ." We may pretermit Tom's arguments in proof of this thesis, and Elsie's comments upon the arguments. ". . . However, she would have drowned herself to a certainty if Anderson had not happened to be in the way to look after her. It's my private belief that he really stayed here, instead of going to India, to look after her. . . ." A further disquisition is in its turn pretermitted. "Well, Violet is recovering, but she

can't get Hugh's words out of her head. . . . . She won't let her father know where she is till she has the proofs of her marriage in her possession. That is easily managed. David Raeburn has them, and you shall call on him and get them this afternoon, and then you can give them to Violet yourself. And just ask David and Phyllis to come to dinner to-night. I want to get Phyllis to look after Anderson's affair with the good Dame Violet. The poor man will never be able. . . . . " What a fellow this Tom is for going off at a tangent! " Pauline has been writing to you at your Cannes address, and instead of an answer got her letter returned, ' in the course of time,' you understand, and, if the officials had only managed to delay it a little more, it would have landed in eternity. . . . . Anyhow, Pauline has come to the conclusion that you have probably come home, and Anderson says she intends coming up to the Crescent this afternoon on the chance of finding you. You will be out, of course; but I will see that she is entertained. . . . So that your part in the performance is reduced to bringing Dame Violet back with you. . . . . And don't forget to order the perambulator for me at seven o'clock

this evening. . . . Why, madam, you are looking like your old self again!"

Explicit Thomas! He had rattled on simply for the pleasure of pleasing Elsie, of bringing the light to her eyes and the colour to her cheeks; and, when at last he allowed her to depart on her mission, there was not a happier girl in Glasgow.

"Bless the dear girl!" said Tom to himself, as she drove away. "She will be all right now." And he went to the office to impart the good news to Mr. Keith, who, in consequence, was seen travelling westward at an unprecedentedly early hour that afternoon.

Tom artfully contrived to be in the way when Pauline arrived at the Crescent. He inveigled her upstairs into the snuggery, and left her there while he went, as he said, to tell her uncle of her arrival.

"Oh, Keith, by-the-by, you are wanted upstairs," said this young hypocrite to his cousin, and not till that young man was well on his way upstairs, did Tom say anything to Mr. Keith at all about his visitor.

Poor Pauline, too restless to sit down, wandered to the window and looked out over the

scene of her picture, till the view was blotted out by the tears that rose unbidden to her eyes. The room was full of memories of her dead lover. She almost dreaded to see her uncle. So long as he had not told her Keith was dead, so long there was a very feeble hope for her, the faintest flickering shadow of a hope born of Dr. Anderson's hint. The hope might have been more robust, but the worthy doctor had given her no more such hints; he had made enquiries in many quarters, always with the same lack of result one way or another. Now as Pauline waited for the words that might take away her hope for evermore, she realised what an essential part of her life was bound up therein. It was a miserable broken-winged hope, as hopes go, never trusting itself to any soaring flights of fancy—the smallest hope that could well be called a hope at all; but it was her all—just the faintest hope that Keith might have escaped with his life—never mind if he were a cripple—never mind any disaster so long as she could cherish him with her love. Let her but keep her poor hope a little; at least she had that till the fatal words were spoken. But who was that coming upstairs? It was not her uncle's

step; and cripples do not come upstairs three steps at a time. Ah, how the girl's heart beat! —what a rosy dawn of resurgent love flamed in her cheeks!—what tender love-lights flickered in her eyes! how the poor little dear hands trembled as Keith, her Keith, came in!—no cripple, thank God—but tall, handsome, stalwart as of old! For an instant he stopped short in sheer surprise :—then—well, it spoilt her bonnet. That expensive piece of millinery was not constructed with any view to such emergencies. Perhaps the next half hour had better be left to the reader's imagination.

After a discreet interval Mr. Keith suddenly awoke to the fact that his long-lost niece was in the house. He forthwith appeared on the scene and the bonnet came to grief again; though indeed by this time it is to be feared that it was pretty well past redemption, like the Scotch little boy who got too far on in his Catechism. Then Violet and Elsie came in. Violet was immediately captured by Mr. Keith, while Tom got hold of Elsie and waltzed her out on to the landing. The waltz finished up with a proceeding which the present discreet chronicler declines to record. That sort of thing is all very well in the abstract.

They made Dame Violet lie down on one of the drawing-room sofas, and she had a nice little sleep, which did her a world of good. She was sadly pale and weak, poor girl, but, on the whole, bore up well. Her husband's death had been all the less of a calamity to her because of the agony which had preceded her knowledge of it. Still, she could not but feel it keenly. She had lost her bright energy and looked wan and listless; but she was loving and gentle and loveable as ever. Pauline, too, looked worn and harassed, but her happiness was her best medicine.

Dinner-time came in due course; and, just as they were sitting down to table, Tom, who had been missing for some little time, reappeared in company with an elderly gentleman, who was a stranger to most of the company.

"Allow me to introduce a friend of mine," said he, "a distinguished agriculturist—Mr. Danby."

Violet looked up as she heard her father's name. She tried to go to him; but she was so weak that she would have fallen but for Dr. Anderson, who put her safely in her father's arms.

"My poor lass! my poor lass!" was all the old man could say.

After that, Violet was as happy as the rest. She had got her father, and she had a right to the name she bore: what more was there left for her in this world?

It was a quiet happy evening, sanctified by the tender memories of the vacant chairs. How Uncle Harry was missed! how even poor Hugh was remembered in kindly fashion! And then, about the middle of the evening, James Crawfurd came in, and with him his wife. Ah! but she looked changed—haggard and woebegone: the old assertion of her manner had vanished, and in its place there had come upon her grace and gentleness—dignity.

"My dear," she said to Violet, "can you forgive me? I did you wrong once, but, believe me, I am sore stricken of God."

James Crawfurd's greeting was different.

"You must be my daughter still, my dear. We cannot bring back the past, but remember, in the future, that you have two fathers."

Of course, Keith and Pauline and the youngsters generally had an irresistible attraction in the cosy snuggery. Once the talk happened to turn on Keith's accident.

"I took care," said Keith, "that there

should be no more mischief with that stuff. See where I put it."

As he spoke he opened his desk, and shot back the panel.

"Hullo! what's this?" he exclaimed, as he saw Hugh's note. He read the note, then handed it in silence to Tom, while he tried to read the riddle of its presence in the secret recess.

"What is this?" said Elsie, lifting a volume out of the desk; and all present recognised Hugh Crawfurd's hymn-book.

"Poor Hugh!" said Tom, as he read the note, "he hardly had a fair chance after all. You must let me show it to Mrs. Crawfurd."

And when Mrs. Crawfurd saw it, all she said was:

"Thank God!"

But she took it away and showed it to Violet, and the two wept tears of joy over it together.

Those who were left could talk about nothing else but Hugh Crawfurd and the sad mystery of his life; for, curiously enough, in spite of all he had wrought of evil in their lives, they all liked him, and some of them loved him.

"Davy," said Tom, "you should make a story of it, old lad."

"And don't be too hard on poor Hugh," said Pauline.

"And don't forget Tom's impudence," said Elsie.

"And don't forget Violet's song," said Keith. "Poor Hugh! his night came soon."

"Ay, that it did," said Tom, "how many things have happened since Violet sang that song to us at Rosebank!"

"It was for Violet we feared then," Elsie whispered, "and since that, the night has been over us all. And now poor Hugh is gone, and . . . . . and . . . . ." She hesitated and looked at Pauline, who was seated on a low stool by Keith's chair, gazing dreamily into the fire. Pauline noticed the pause, and spoke without looking up.

"Nay, dear," she said, "they have the morning." Then, after a pause, she went on abstractedly:—

> "After the darksome night
> Cometh the morning light;
> Day breaks at last."

And then there was a long silence.

EPILOGUE.

DAVID RAEBURN LOQUITUR.

IN life, as in physics, force is measured in terms of motion; and so, with the attainment of the equilibrium, comes the ending of the story. The persons of the drama fade away into real life, and resume their places in the workaday world, where motives are hidden and characters are enshrouded in misleading action and bewildering circumstance. Into that world we cannot follow them, for the first law of its being is that the heart knoweth its own bitterness and joy, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith. When the actor leaves the stage, he is no longer the servant of the public; but, just as the public may send its good wishes behind the curtain, so readers may wish well to their vanished *dramatis personae* whose span of stage, life is over. What manner of life is it, when the limit of the years of the story is passed and they have settled down to unapplauded or unexecrated, and generally unappre-

ciated existence? No doubt Keith and Pauline, Tom and Elsie, will have their joys and sorrows like ordinary mortals. They will have vacant chairs around their hearths and aching hearts to correspond. They will take little comfort even from the sympathy of many readers of this "sturm und drang" period of their lives. They will become self-centred and individual, and will feel the dread partings that come in all double lives, as their own exceeding sorrow, rather than vicariously as the sorrow of their readers. So with the others. Readers will be sorry for the Doctor if he misses after all the prize of his life and fails to win the woman he loves for his wife. But what will all this avail the Doctor when he feels as a real man and not as a character? The Doctor we cannot help, but we can assuage the sympathetic pangs of the generous reader—by seeing to it that the proper persons are duly united in holy matrimony before they pass beyond our vision. As far as the reader's sympathies are concerned, it really does not seem as though later events in life were of much importance. Suffice it to say that in the course of time the Doctor had his reward. And now it only remains that the present chronicler should

shuffle off this *un*mortal coil and, vanishing into the chaos of real life and identity, leave behind but the shadow of his name to know himself by when "revisiting" the glimpses of the moon of phantasy.

DAVID RAEBURN.

END OF VOL. II.

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